By Mayor Beth A. Taylor

It’s time to welcome summer and the beautiful weather and fun activities that this season brings to our community. Here’s some of the latest news I would like to share with you.

Big Thanks!
Wythe Arts Council

Congratulations to the Wythe Arts Council on another successful Chautauqua Festival in the Park. This eight-day family-oriented music and arts festival is presented each year through the hard work of countless volunteers with the Wythe Arts Council. Through over 35 years, this non-profit organization has diligently endeavored to provide entertainment and extend cultural opportunities for our area. The longevity of this festival shows the dedication of this organization to successfully produce this annual event. Our area is fortunate to have this festival of free entertainment for all ages to enjoy. We applaud the efforts of the Wythe Arts Council and sincerely thank them for the contribution they make to the Arts in our community.

What’s New?
Criminal Blight Ordinance

Due to receiving several complaints and to make the Town of Wytheville safer for everyone, the Town Council recently passed an ordinance regarding criminal blight on real property. Criminal blight includes activities that endanger the public health or safety of the residents such as, but not limited to, the regular presence of individuals using, possessing, manufacturing or distributing controlled substances or the repeated act of maliciously discharging a firearm. Property owners will be held responsible for ongoing criminal activity on their property. Once a property owner receives notice of this activity on their property, there will be a 30-day time period in which the criminal blight is required to be removed. The Town encourages any property owner who is notified of criminal blight on their property to immediately take steps to remove to avoid the Town having to pursue further action. To view a copy of the Criminal Blight Ordinance, please contact the Municipal Offices at (276) 223-3349.

Millwald Theatre Purchase

On June 24, the purchase of the Millwald Theatre was finalized. The Theatre is the most important remaining property needed to complete the economic revitalization of Wytheville’s Downtown Historic District. The restored theatre will attract more than 46,000 visitors annually, supporting the independent shops, restaurants and brewer- ies that are once again locating Downtown.

Throughout its history, the Millwald was used primarily as a motion picture theatre. Plans are to restore it to an original 500 seat auditorium with a balcony. The New Millwald will operate most days and offer motion pictures as well as live performances and educational opportunities for all ages.

A grant provided by the Wytheville IDA to Millwald Theatre, Inc has made it possible to begin this project. The nonprofit organization’s Board of Directors will use public grants and private fundraising to complete the project which will take about three years.
What You Need to Know

Health Alert

Dr. Karen Shelton, Medical Director for Wythe County Health Department, recently shared some serious concerns with me regarding the increase in Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) illnesses in the State of Virginia. From January 1, 2019 to April 19, 2019, there were 44 new cases of Hepatitis A Virus reported, which is a 132% increase over the prior year. Most of us are vaccinated for Hepatitis B but not Hepatitis A.

What is Hepatitis? Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver, in this case caused by Hepatitis A Virus (HAV)

How is it spread? Hepatitis A is found in the fecal matter (stool) of infected individuals. It is spread by contamination of surfaces, objects, food and water.

Who gets Hepatitis A? Anyone that is not vaccinated for Hepatitis A Virus is at risk for getting the disease. There are high risk groups that may include but not limited to, people who travel to areas where Hepatitis A is common, people who may use recreational drugs and those with a poor immune system may be at higher risk.

Contact your Primary Care Provider or call the Wythe County Health Department at 276-228-5507, for more information.

Other News

Mowing Cost & Fines

For those citizens, for whatever reasons, who choose not to mow their lots, the Town has guidelines in place for the reimbursement expenses for mowing and weed-eating. Most lots are $125.00/hour to mow and $50/hour to weed-eat. Fines may also apply. Sec 12-91 of the Town code sets the fines at $50/day (this can add up each day) for the first offense, and $200/day (can really add up) for subsequent offenses, with an annual max of $3,000. Please consider hiring someone to do your mowing in a timely fashion, it will be cheaper for you and will allow our Public Works employees to do other needed jobs in town.

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.