



City of Westminster

NEWS AND NOTES

June 2020



City Services and the COVID-19 Pandemic

As of the date of this newsletter, Westminster government continues to operate in a modified fashion due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Provided below is information on the current status of certain City facilities, as well as public meetings.

- The Westminster Municipal Pool will remain closed for the entirety of the 2020 season. This decision was based on a variety of factors, including the uncertainty of when the State would allow such facilities to open and challenges associated with lifeguard certification.
- On Friday, May 15, the City re-opened tennis courts, pickleball courts, and the Skate Park. Facility users are limited to no more than 10 people at a time, and are expected to maintain a 6-foot physical distance.
- City playgrounds, park pavilions, and basketball courts remain closed due to the difficulty in maintaining safe physical distancing guidelines at these locations.
- Park use is allowed, but gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited. Park users must follow the 6-foot physical distancing guidelines.
- Weekly household trash collection provided by Ecology Services remains on its normal schedule, with the exception of recognized holidays. Changes will be posted on the City's website and Facebook page.
- Collection of large items and pick up of yard waste have been temporarily scaled back. Please see below for more information.

Meetings of the Mayor and Common Council, as well as those of City boards/commissions, are being held virtually for the foreseeable future. The meetings are being live-streamed through the City's Facebook page and available to view by visiting www.facebook.com/WestminsterMD. Those wishing to submit testimony for public hearings or to offer comments under the Citizen Comments portion of the Mayor and Common Council meeting agenda can send an email to City Clerk Shannon Visocsky at Comments@westgov.com.

The City is continuing to monitor developments related to the Governor's Roadmap to Recovery and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Please check the City website and Facebook page for the most current information on City meetings, Westminster government's operational status, and event cancellations.

City Bulk Item/Yard Waste Collection

To maintain the health of its employees and to ensure the continuity of our most important government services during the pandemic, the City has implemented new staffing procedures in the Street Department. As a result, the City has had to temporarily scale back large item and yard waste collection. Impacted services include curbside collection of tree branches and brush, metal, yard waste, and large item collections such as furniture. Until further notice, yard waste pickup will be made on a monthly basis, while bulk item collection will be made on a quarterly basis. Future collection dates will be announced two weeks in advance, and will be posted to the City's website and Facebook pages.

As a reminder, collection of bulk items and yard waste must be scheduled. No items should be placed at the curb without confirmation by the Street Department of a collection date. **To request a pickup, Westminster residents can call the Street Department directly at 410-848-9077.** Due to limited onsite staffing, please leave a message so that a City staff member can return your call and confirm the collection date.

Residents are always encouraged to mulch grass clippings as a natural thatch fertilizer. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. We look forward to resuming regular collection service as soon as we are able to do so.

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Follow us on Facebook for the following information:

Westminster, Maryland: Holiday schedule changes, inclement weather and emergency information

City of Westminster Recreation & Parks Department: Events, parade information, fitness classes, park openings

Downtown Westminster, Maryland: News about Downtown Westminster, from business openings and specials to events and business news

Westminster Fiber Network: Keep up to date with the WFN



Plastic Bag Ban Implementation Postponed

On May 13, 2019, the Common Council adopted Ordinance No. 911, imposing certain restrictions on the distribution at business establishments of single-use plastic bags. Ordinance No. 911 was scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2020.

The business community has been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. To alleviate any unnecessary burden, on May 11, 2020 the Mayor and Common Council enacted Emergency Ordinance No. 923, deferring the effective date of the City's plastic bag distribution restrictions until July 1, 2021.

City Supports Library Exploration Commons Project

In the near future, the Carroll County Public Library will begin construction on the Exploration Commons at 50 East Main Street. The Library is renovating the 14,000 square-foot lower level of the Westminster Branch into an interactive community space that will offer a tech-focused Makerspace, a professional teaching kitchen, and multiple collaborative workspaces.

The Westminster Branch expansion triggered the need for additional parking to meet the requirements of the City's Zoning Ordinance, which the Library was unable to provide onsite. As part of the City's effort to support the Exploration Commons project, the Mayor and Common Council agreed to assist the Library in meeting its parking requirements via a license agreement for 77 spaces in the City-owned Longwell Parking Garage. The Mayor and Common Council approved execution of that agreement on March 23, 2020.

Westminster Police Department News

On January 13, 2020, the Mayor and Common Council approved a Memorandum of Agreement between the Westminster Police Department, the Carroll County Sheriff's Office, and the Carroll County State's Attorney's Office related to the Carroll County Drug Task Force. The restructuring of the Drug Task Force is part of Westminster Police Chief Tom Ledwell's ongoing efforts to focus on safety and quality of life issues, such as deterring drug dealers from operating in Westminster. Drug-related activity is often the root cause of many street crimes, including thefts from autos in the City.

The Westminster Police Department is participating in an 18-month pilot project with the Carroll County Health Department (CCHD) to implement Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD). The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, along with the Maryland Department of Health, the Behavioral Health Administration, and the Office of the Public Defender, are working with local law enforcement and health agencies to support three existing and six new LEAD and detention-based diversion programs for nine sites in Maryland. LEAD is a tool that empowers police to refer eligible individuals to public health services. This model has shown an improvement in public safety outcomes and reducing costs, while also supporting law enforcement partners and community members. Only select individuals under specific criteria would be eligible for diversion as a problem-solving tool. The Mayor and Common Council authorized the associated Memorandum of Understanding on February 10, 2020.

In March 2020, Chief Ledwell implemented a new schedule for the patrol division of the Westminster Police Department. The new six squad, 12-hour patrol staff schedule better aligns staffing with the Department's workload and community service needs. The new schedule provides two to three additional police officers on the street during busy periods.

Everyone Counts: Please Respond to 2020 Census Mailing

Recently, you should have received a mailing from the United States Census Bureau. The City of Westminster is asking all community members to do their part to meet the goal of counting everyone once – and only once – in the right place. Why does your participation in the 2020 Census matter? Compiled every 10 years, Census data is used by the government to:



- Define representative boundaries for congressional districts, state legislative districts and voting precincts, and for enforcing voting rights and civil rights legislation.
- Determine how billions of dollars in federal funding are distributed. It is estimated that each person not counted by the Census costs the state about \$18,250 over a 10-year period, for a total of \$26.6 billion statewide. This impacts critical funding for programs, including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), emergency preparedness, school construction, and transportation projects.

So, please take a few minutes to complete the Census questionnaire you received. Your personal information is legally protected and confidential, and you may respond online, by phone, or by mail.

City Strategic Plan – Water and Sewer Capacity

A major focus area of the Mayor and Common Council's adopted Strategic Plan for 2018-2021 is ensuring water and sewer capacity for future generations. Over the last few years, the Mayor and Common Council have hosted a series of meetings to share information with the Westminster community about the City's ongoing efforts to address the existing constraints to ensure the continued growth and prosperity of Westminster.

A good way to get up to speed on the City's efforts is to watch a brief (less than 30 minutes) video that is available on the YouTube channel of the Community Media Center of Carroll County: <https://www.youtube.com/user/carrollmediacenter> or view the video directly at the following link:

<https://www.carrollmediacenter.org/episode/westminster-special-meeting-mayor-and-common-council-12-11-2019>.