# City of Westminster, Maryland

News and Notes
September 2020 Issue

**Mailing Address:**

56 West Main Street
Suite 1
Westminster, MD
21157

**Important Phone Numbers:**

Police
410-848-4646

Finance/Billing
410-848-3255

Recreation & Parks
410-751-5501

Find us on Facebook

·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

## Mayor and Common Council Adopt Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

On June 8, 2020 the Mayor and Common Council adopted the fiscal year (FY) 2021 budget. The City's new fiscal year began July 1, 2020 and ends June 30, 2021.

During the budget review process, the Mayor and Common Council had extensive discussions regarding the Westminster Family Fitness Center, which has consistently operated at a deficit in recent years. The Mayor and Common Council charged the Recreation and Parks Director with developing a plan to make the Fitness Center self-supporting. The adopted FY 2021 budget incorporates the provisions of that plan, which include a new Fitness Center membership fee structure and staffing changes to reduce operating costs.

A major focus in crafting the FY 2021 budget was the continued implementation of the Compensation and Classification Study results. The City undertook this assessment of its salary and benefit structure in early FY 2018 to ensure its ability to attract and retain a quality workforce. The Study results were implemented in three phases, with FY 2021 marking the third year of that process.

For the eighth year in a row, the City's real property tax rate will remain at $0.56 per $100 of assessed valuation; the City will receive more revenue due to higher property values in FY 2021. Personal property tax rates will also remain unchanged. Water and sewer rates will be adjusted based on the multi-year rate plan adopted two years ago.

Combined expenditures for all funds in FY 2021 total approximately $64.5 million. The budget provides funding to advance several initiatives included in the City's Strategic Plan. These initiatives include ongoing efforts to reduce inflow and infiltration into the City's sewer system; minimizing inflow and infiltration will restore sewer treatment capacity, which is critical to Westminster's continued economic growth. Water Fund expenditures include continued work on the City's water re-use initiative, one of several projects underway to identify new water sources.

In FY 2021, the City anticipates completion of renovations to the 45 West Main Street property (formerly occupied by BB&T Bank), which will serve as the future home of the City's administrative offices. Work will also continue on the multi-year ENR/ Biosolids Upgrade Project at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Bond financing in the amount of $1,225,000 will be used to pay for repairs to the main pool of the Westminster Municipal Pool Complex and the installation of new plumbing and filtration equipment.

## Community Planning and Development

By State law, the City's restaurants and other businesses are only allowed to operate at reduced capacity. The Community Planning and Development staff continues to work with the business community on alternative ways to serve their customers in light of these restrictions. As part of that effort, the City has approved a number of applications for expanded outdoor dining in an effort to assist local restaurants.

On June 11, the Planning and Zoning Commission conditionally approved a site plan application for Mission BBQ at the former Friendly's Restaurant location on Route 140. The site plan application for the 7-Eleven at Route 140 and N. Center Street was also conditionally approved and includes gas pumps and new signage.

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**City Services and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Westminster government is moving forward with its efforts to bring City services closer to pre-coronavirus pandemic conditions. Provided below is information on the current status of City facilities, as well as public meetings.

- With the approval of the Health Officer for Carroll County, the City has re-opened all of its outdoor recreational facilities. They include parks; park pavilions; playgrounds; basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts; and, the Skate Park. Users are encouraged to practice proper hygiene and follow the recommended 6-foot physical distancing guideline. Park pavilions and playground equipment should be used at your own risk; the City cannot sanitize equipment. Always wash hands after using park equipment. Please note that public bathroom facilities remain closed at this time.

- The Westminster Fitness Center continues to operate, with safety measures in place to protect guests and employees. As required by the State, entrants will be monitored until 50% capacity is reached. Masks are required at all times, unless engaging in physical activities where the use of a face covering is likely to pose a safety risk.

- Meetings of the Mayor and Common Council, as well as those of City boards/commissions, are continuing to be held virtually. 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.

- City offices and the Police Department lobby remain closed to the public.

- Staff members who can productively work remotely are continuing to do so, to limit the number of employees in City offices. The City has taken measures to ensure physical distancing, including staggered work schedules and lunch breaks, to protect employees working onsite.

- On July 27, 2020, the Mayor and Common Council voted to cancel the City's remaining events for 2020 due to continued concerns about the potential risk of COVID-19. They include Fallfest, the Oyster Stroll, Downtown Halloween events, the Miracle on Main Street Holiday Parade, and other holiday events. In making their decision, the elected body considered how scaling back these events to meet safety standards would diminish the guest experience. The Mayor and Common Council also took into account the difficulty that participating organizations would likely have in finding volunteers.

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. Future changes in City operations will continue to prioritize employee well-being while also minimizing health risks. Please check the City website and Facebook page for the most current information on City meetings and Westminster government's operational status

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## New Deadline for 2020 Census Response

The new deadline for responses to the 2020 Census is September 30. Starting July 30th, the U.S. Census Bureau began following up with households in Carroll County that have not yet responded to the 2020 Census. Census takers will begin interviewing households by going door-to-door to interview residents for Census responses. Carroll County households still have the option of completing and mailing back the paper questionnaire they received, responding online at 2020census.gov, or by phone at 844-330-2020. Those households who use one of these methods now will not need to be visited by a census taker.

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. 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.

Please do your part to make sure that Westminster, Carroll County, and the State get their fair share of federal funding.

## A Message from the Westminster Police Department

Chief Thomas Ledwell wishes to share with the Westminster community that the Westminster Police Department (WPD) unequivocally condemns the actions of the former Minneapolis police officers and found them to be deeply disturbing and unacceptable. The treatment of Mr. Floyd, through the technique and indifference used and displayed by these officers, is in no way consistent with the training and policy of the WPD. The WPD trains, and its policy is to immediately discontinue any level of force when the level of threat or resistance no longer justifies it, to place the person in a “recovery position,” and immediately summon emergency medical services when requested or warranted.

The WPD will continue to work hard to create a culture of community-oriented policing; to ensure that we treat all people who we encounter with dignity and respect; and, to consistently seek out and provide training to our personnel that results in the appropriate application of police techniques and use of force. We also provide our personnel with the insight and skill sets regarding important issues, such as implicit bias, de-escalation, mental health first aid, autism awareness, and other important topics.

Last year, the WPD sought out important programs and lesson plans to bring to our department and to teach our staff. During fall 2019 in-service training sessions, instructors taught evidence-based de-escalation, cultural diversity, and implicit bias blocks of instruction.

This will be an ongoing process, and the WPD will continue to look at its policies and training curriculum to ensure that we remain current with best practices, and consider options that best ensure the safety of all members of our community.

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# Scheduled Yard Waste and Bulk Trash Collections Have Resumed

Weekly curbside collection of yard waste has resumed its normal collection schedule of every Wednesday. Yard waste must be in paper bags or bushel containers, and pickups must be scheduled to ensure collection.

Bi-weekly curbside collection of tree limbs and brush, metal and tires, and other bulk trash has resumed as well. Pickup requests must be scheduled in order to guarantee collection on the appropriate date.

To schedule a pickup request, please call:

**410-848-9077**

# City Phone Lines Now Automated

As part of its ongoing commitment to providing the highest quality service, the City of Westminster is enhancing its phone system capabilities.

Effective July 1, 2020, the City implemented its new automated phone system. When calling 410-848-9000, callers are be able to utilize the menu to reach their desired department or a dial-by-name directory.

Direct-dial phone numbers for each department are available by visiting the City's website at www.WestminsterMD.gov.