

In and About

Washington

July 2025

FREE – TAKE ONE

Town pays off last piece of huge debt

Mayor Dwight Landreneau has signed a check to pay the last penny owed on a \$750,000 debt that several years ago brought the town perilously close to bankruptcy.

When Mayor James Olivier took office in January 2019 the state was preparing to declare Washington a “financially distressed community” and take over administration of its financial affairs. When he resigned for health reasons at the end of that year, he had been able to trim the debt a little, but wrote in an open letter that “the town is falling behind in essential payments.”

Since Mayor Dwight Landreneau took office in January 2020 he has maintained a bare-bones budget, sold surplus property, kept a tight rein on spending, aggressively sought grants particularly for infrastructure maintenance, implemented utility rate increases that auditors said were long overdue, and paid down the debt a little at a time.

Landreneau thanked the Town Council, office staff, public works employees, and “the many volunteers and donors who made this happen.” He also thanked state senators Gerald Boudreaux and Heather Cloud and representative Dustin Miller who worked to relieve some of the debt owed the state and who sponsored state appropriations to help the town meet its obligations.



Washington administrators and Town Council members look on as Mayor Dwight Landreneau signs a check paying the final creditor to erase a huge town debt. Municipal clerk Halli Polotzola is seated next to the mayor. Standing, from left, are public works director Jimmy Alfred, volunteer administrative assistant Anne Jones, and council members Beau Wilson, Rogers Malveaux, Erick Fontenot, Tanya Doucet, and Mary Ann

Washington Catholics have new pastor



Father Campeaux

Parishioners bid farewell to Father Matthew Higginbotham at a reception after the 4 p.m. Mass on June 21. He has been reassigned to Our Lady of Nativity Parish in New Iberia after serving as pastor of Immaculate Conception and Holy Trinity churches in Washington since 2017.

The new pastor is Father Corey Campeaux, who has been pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Gueydan. The Lafayette Parish native was ordained in June 2010. He entered the seminary after graduating from St. Thomas More High School and studied at Catholic University of America in Washington DC. He has also served at St. Pius X in Lafayette, St. Mary Magdalene in Abbeville, and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Church Point.

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Of Note

JASPER NEYLAND Post 209 needs sponsors for windows, porches, the front bay window, and soffits to complete the restoration of the American Legion home. Donations are tax deductible. For information contact Dane St. Cyr at (337) 344-0469 or Don Simoneaux at (337) 209-1661.

THE POST will sell chicken or pork barbecue dinners for \$12 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on July 12. Proceeds will be used for renovation of the American Legion property.

FUNDING HAS not yet been approved for a St. Landry Council on Aging program to offer hot meals for qualifying seniors at the Washington Recreation Center and to deliver them to homebound people.

THE WASHINGTON Main Street steering committee met June 18 to continue the process for designation as a Main Street America community. The process takes about 18 months. Interested persons are encouraged to visit the Louisiana Main Street website at louisianamainstreet.org to learn about the program.

YOU CAN DONATE to the Washington Cemetery Foundation via the Venmo payment app or by check to P.O. Box 42, Washington LA 70589.



Washington students going to Palmetto

Washington Elementary School has officially been closed and its 130 students transferred to Palmetto Elementary. The Washington campus will be used to offer career and technical courses, according to St. Landry school superintendent Milton Batiste III.

He said Washington parents may send their children to other nearby schools if those schools have room for them, but that they may have to provide transportation themselves. School board member Raymond Cassimire said parents should check with the school board office to see about those other options.



St. Cyr

Bus routes are not yet set. Palmetto is about ten miles from Washington. The PreK-6 school listed 230 students last year, when it achieved an A grade from the state education department. Its principal is Lindsey St. Cyr.

Washington Elementary principal Kyle Sylvester will become principal at North Central High School in Lebeau. Most Washington Elementary staff members have filled vacancies in other parish schools, Batiste said.

The new technical school will be the third life for the Washington campus. It was opened in 1954 as Dunbar High School for Black students. It became Washington Elementary after Washington High and Dunbar High were combined for the 1969-1970 school year.

High court skips remap plan decision

The U.S. Supreme Court put off a decision on a reapportionment plan that places Washington in a newly created majority Black district now represented by Cleo Fields. The case will be reset for further argument later this year because the justices have questions about how the legislature drew the plan.



Upgrade coming

The side entrance ramp to the museum on Main Street will soon be upgraded, and other work is planned as grant funds become available. The building was Washington's town hall from 1940 until the current one opened in 1978.

It was built for \$13,670 as a project of the Depression-era Works Progress Administration using bricks salvaged after a 1934 tornado wrecked the Plonsky Opera House that stood on the site.

Little spending change in new budget year

The town budget for the fiscal year that began July 1 is practically a mirror image of the last one. The town spent \$1,799,621 last year. The new budget anticipates spending of \$1,715,059.

The new budget is largely based on expected regular income from taxes and fees of \$1,578,040, some \$75,000 in other income, and about \$70,000 in grants.

The biggest expenses are associated with utility maintenance (\$730,260), general government (\$344,365), capital outlay for repairs and construction (\$305,000), public safety (\$154,090), and street maintenance (\$117,232).

The bottom line is a predicted surplus at the end of the year of just over \$9,000, which is probably a conservative estimate.

Sales tax issue to be on October ballot

Washington voters will decide October 11 whether to reinstate a 0.2 % sales tax that expired at the end of June. The tax generates about \$30,000 in revenue that is dedicated solely for street, sidewalk, and drainage improvements.

Sales taxes in Washington total 1.20%, broken into two taxes. A 1% tax was approved in 1974. This tax does not have an expiration date and does not need to be renewed.

The 0.2% tax was approved in 1990 and must be renewed regularly. It was last renewed in 2010. The October 11 proposition calls for it to be continued until 2035.

This tax officially ended on June 30, lowering the local sales tax to 1% and resulting in a decrease in maintenance revenue. If the 0.2% proposition is approved, the Washington tax rate will return to 1.2% in 2026 and bring the revenue back to what it has been in the past.

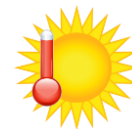
From

Town Hall

BAYOU STATE WASTE is reminding residents that it does not handle bulky items such as appliances, mattresses, furniture, or anything too big to fit into a garbage cart. You should call Morgan & Morgan Land Prep, (337) 331-5375, to schedule pickup of those items.

UTILITY CUSTOMERS are reminded that bill payments are due on the 17th of each month and that payments received after 3 p.m. are posted on the next business day. A \$10 late fee is charged if the bill is not paid on time.

WASHINGTON WEATHER



July forecast: Wet,
hot, and humid

June 1-27

High: 95, June 19
Avg. High: 86.8
Low: 65, June 1
Avg. Low: 72.5
Avg. Temp: 79.6
5-Year Avg: 80.1
June Rainfall: 4.28
Avg. for June: 4.52
Rain for 2025: 31.33
20-Year Avg: 26.80

Ice was a precious commodity in hot summers here

In days gone by, ice was a precious and expensive commodity in the heat of summer in Washington. It was hard to keep and hard to come by until the middle 1850s, when the town's first ice house was built next to the Eagle Hotel on Bayou Courtableau.

The *Opelousas Patriot* recorded in May 1856, "Wm. Ireland, of the Eagle Hotel, Washington, has established an ice-house, and will be prepared constantly to supply it in any quantity that may be desired. This is a need which has long been felt; and we are gratified to know that it has been promptly met by the public spirit and enterprise of our old friend Ireland."

Mr. Ireland almost surely didn't make the ice. The first primitive system to manufacture ice wasn't patented until 1853 and probably hadn't reached Washington by 1856. Ice was cut from frozen lakes up north, packed in sawdust, and shipped to New Orleans, from which it was sent elsewhere by steamboat.

Until ice houses were built to store bigger blocks, it was shipped in kegs that held as much sawdust as ice. The sawdust was the key to slowing melting so that ice could be hauled from one place to another with enough of it left to be worthwhile.

The Ireland ice house stood for many years. David Jasper McNicoll recalled in his Washington memoir that an ice house stood on Water Street in the late 1880s. He said the ice was sold for five cents a pound. "When you reflect that choice beef could ... be bought for the same price, you realize that ice was a luxury," he commented, "The ice business was really connected with the John Reed Hotel."

John Reed is almost certainly a later name for the Eagle Hotel. McNicoll's description matches it exactly, and, writing in 1997, he said the hotel had been on the bayou for all his life.



Looking Back

Mark the date for these St. Landry events

- ◆ Red, White, and Boom, Fourth of July Celebration, 4 p.m. Yambilee building, Opelousas
- ◆ Leonville Fireworks Show, 6 to 9:30 p.m., Bayou Teche boat launch. July 4
- ◆ Fireworks on the River, 6:30 to 8 p.m., Nail Park, Krotz Springs, July 4
- ◆ Fourth of July Fireworks Show, 9 to 10 p.m., Eunice Recreation Complex, July 4
- ◆ Lebeau Zydeco Festival, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., Immaculate Conception Church, July 5
- ◆ Zydeco Dance Lessons, 6 p.m. each Wednesday, Holy Ghost Church cafeteria, Opelousas
- ◆ Rendezvous in the Prairie, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. each Thursday, Prairie Acadian Cultural Center, Eunice
- ◆ Concert band and Choir, 7 p.m., July 10, 11, First Baptist Church, Eunice
- ◆ Zydeco Capital Jam, 1 to 3 p.m., July 12, St. Landry Visitor Center, I-49 exit 23
- ◆ Jammin' on the Bayou. 1 to 3 p.m. July 19, St. Landry Visitor Center, I-49 exit 23



Come see us today!

**St. Landry Visitor Center
978 Kennerson Road
(I-49 exit 23)**

**337.948.8004
cajuntravel.com**