

VISION WEST

West Baton Rouge Parish - Community, Growth, Possibilities

A quarterly publication for West Baton Rouge residents by your public agencies • October, 2015

Calendar of Events

VETERANS DAY CELEBRATIONS

November 8, 1:30 pm
Veterans on Parade, Port Allen

Nov. 11, 11 am – Veterans Day Ceremony, WBR Courthouse



Nov. 1-Nov. 30 – Kids basketball league registration (See pg. 3)

Nov. 1-Jan. 17 – The Portrait exhibit, WBR Museum

Nov. 21-Jan. 3 – A Charlie Brown Christmas exhibit, WBR Museum

Nov. 21 – Election Day

Dec. 3, 6:30 pm – Uncorked Cartoons, WBR Museum

Dec. 12 – Holiday Open House, WBR Museum

Dec. 3-24 - Reflections of Season, WBR Visitor Center

Progress on recreational upgrades continues

Substantial progress is being made on numerous recreational projects for parish residents. Levee-top trails are complete or underway, the Rivault Park re-design is underway, and new playground systems with rubber pad surfaces are being installed at five parks.

The levee-top trail projects in Port Allen and Brusly had both been on hold until September due to high water in the Mississippi River. The extension of the Old Ferry Landing Park in Port Allen is now complete. It adds about seven-tenths of a mile from the end of the existing trail to the north. The \$100,000 project was a joint venture between West Baton Rouge Parish and the City of Port Allen.

Work has also resumed on the South End Trailhead at the intersection of Main Street and River Road in Brusly. The trailhead will extend one half mile in each direction. Once that is complete, parish crews will pave one mile of levee top so the trail will extend one mile in both directions from the trailhead.

The \$1 million project is being funded by a \$707,000 grant, and \$240,000 in parish funds.

In addition, the parish has received a \$372,000 grant to extend a trail from Myhand Park to the levee top in Addis. "This project is in the conceptual phase right now," noted Kevin Durbin, Director of Community Planning and Development. "It will require crossing La. Hwy. 1, which (continued on Page 2)



The top photo shows a portion of the completed new levee top trail in Port Allen. In the middle photo, work is underway on the re-design of Rivault Park. And in the bottom photo, one of the new playground systems being installed at five new parks is shown. The rubber pad base on the concrete will be installed by mid November.

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WBR PARISH COUNCIL - Meets 2nd & 4th Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Parish Council Building, 225-383-4755, www.wbrCouncil.org

WBR PARISH SCHOOL BOARD - Committee meetings on 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. School Board meetings on 3rd Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. at the School Board office, 225-343-8309, www.wbrschools.net

WBR PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION - Meets on the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Council meeting room in the Parish Council Building.

TOWN OF ADDIS - Meets on 1st Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Addis Town Hall. Phone: 225-687-4844, www.addisla.org

CITY OF PORT ALLEN - Committee meetings on 1st Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. Town council meetings on 2nd Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m., 225-346-5670, www.portallen.org

TOWN OF BRUSLY - Committee meetings on 1st Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Town Council meetings on 2nd Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m., 225-749-2909, www.bruslyla.com

Postal Patron Local

Permit No. 142
Hattiesburg, MS 39402
PAID
U.S. Postage
Presorted Standard



Progress on recreational upgrades continues

(continued from Page 1)

means pedestrian access across La. Hwy. 1 will be necessary. Options are being considered now. Because of the planning, reviews and permits required, we expect actual construction on this project to begin in mid-2017." The grant is through the La. Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Program.

"The goal of these projects is not only to provide more recreational opportunities, but also to make more walkable communities," noted Durbin.

ROSEDALE ROAD SIDEWALK

Another project to provide safe walking routes for residents is expected to begin by the end of the year. The \$1.3 million project includes installing culverts in the ditch and adding 3/4 of a mile of sidewalk along Rosedale Road.

Since Rosedale Road is a state highway, the project is being funded by the La. Department of Transportation and Development. It is presently advertising for bids on the work, and the project is expected to begin in January of 2016. The sidewalk will extend from La. Hwy. 1 to Three Canal Bridge.

"This road gets a lot of pedestrian traffic and it's a dangerous situation because of the deep ditches next to the road and the speed of vehicles on the road," said Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot. He said the parish



In the photo above, workers laying out the levee top trailhead at Brusly.

plans call for eventually extending the sidewalk to the levee and tying it into the city's levee top trail system.

RIVALT PARK RE-DESIGN AND IMPROVEMENTS

Meanwhile, work is underway on the re-design and improvements to Rivault Park in Port Allen. The 2-year project includes flipping the baseball field to face north east, so that central bathrooms and the concession stand will be more accessible. The new field, with new backstops, dugouts, bleachers and a parking lot, will be added, along with a skate park, lighting improvements and signage.

Presently the field surface is undergoing laser grade leveling and irrigation work, with sodding expected by the end of October. The

new light poles, backtop and dugouts will be completed before the Spring baseball season.

PLAYGROUND SYSTEMS WITH RUBBER PADS

Kids will be able to enjoy new playground systems with rubber pads on the concrete by mid-November. The systems are being installed at Lukeville Park, Molatto Bend Park, Rivault Park, Williams & Lee Park, and Winterville Park. "Each of the systems will have rubber pads, which are easy on kids but not as messy as the sand playgrounds," noted Recreation Director Anatole Vincent.

WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM



Calendar for Fall/Winter 2015

Nov. 1 - Jan. 17: The Portrait, the Artist, and the Patron: 19th Century Portraiture in Louisiana exhibit

Nov. 21 - Jan. 3: A Charlie Brown Christmas Turns 50 exhibit

Nov. 15, 2 pm: "Angela Gregory's New State Capitol Art" lecture by Susan Hymel for the Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture series, presented by the WBR Historical Association. Reception and viewing of the Gregory sculptures. Refreshments will be served.

Dec. 2, noon: Lunchtime lecture Nineteenth Century Louisiana Portraits, A Collector's Perspective: Attorney and collector Eugene Groves will discuss the impact of early photography on Louisiana portrait painting.

Dec. 3, 6:30 - 8:30 pm: Uncorked Cartoons: An evening of how-to-drawing. Inspired by A Charlie Brown Christmas, grownups will join illustrator Erik van Buren for a fun and relaxed event. Wine and refreshments served.

Dec. 12, 1-4 pm: Holiday Open House: Performance by Grammy Award winner Michael Doucet of BeauSoleil performing music rooted in the folk tunes of Creole Louisiana. Performance made possible by Manship on the Move. Enjoy an afternoon of holiday music, warm cider, gingerbread, craft making, Charlie Brown Christmas 50th anniversary cartooning fun, visit with Papa Noel, and "Find the Elves."

January 13, noon: Lunchtime lecture "The Portrait, the Artist, and the Patron" presented by art historian Claudia Kheel. Illustrated talk about 19th century portrait paintings.

Charlie Brown Christmas exhibit opens Nov. 21

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the beloved Peanuts animated tale, A Charlie Brown Christmas, the West Baton Rouge Museum will host the exhibition: The 50th Anniversary of A Charlie Brown Christmas. The exhibit opens November 21 and runs through January 3, 2016.



A Charlie Brown Christmas is the longest running cartoon special in

history, and is a holiday favorite for countless families.

The exhibit will feature artwork and creations by the talented artists and illustrators of the Baton Rouge Cartoonist Society. Peanuts items and artifacts on loan from local visitors will also be on display. The animated film, A Charlie Brown Christmas, will be shown on Sundays at 2:30 p.m. on Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 13, 20, and 27 and Jan. 3.

19th Century Portraiture exhibit

The West Baton Rouge Museum will host the exhibition, The Portrait, the Artist, and the Patron: 19th Century Portraiture in Louisiana beginning November 1, through January 17, 2016. The exhibit features master works from the Historic New Orleans Collection, the Paul and Lulu Hilliard Museum, as well as private collections, and includes American and European artists. Photography is also included in this exhibit. For more information visit www.westbatonrougemuseum.com or call (225) 336-2422 x 15.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION:

VISION WEST is published quarterly as a cooperative endeavor of West Baton Rouge Parish government agencies to educate residents about projects, activities and services in the parish. It is produced by Peacock Communications, LLC. Comments can be sent to: ellie@peacockcommunications.com, or call 225-929-9661.



WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH GOVERNMENT



Workshops focus on reducing youth alcohol use

Community prevention strategies to reduce alcohol and tobacco use among youth was the focus of educational workshops held October 13 and 14 by the West Baton Rouge Healthy Community Coalition (WBRHCC).

Numerous parish leaders, business owners, parents, educators, healthcare professionals, community leaders and others were invited to the workshop, which featured speakers from the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America.

“These workshops are a significant first step in building awareness, forming partnerships, and seeking strategies to keep our community healthy,” said Anatole Vincent, WBRHCC Chair.

With Drug Free Community (DFC) grant funding from the Office of National Drug Control Policy and federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in 2014, the Coalition has been working to enhance prevention efforts to reduce underage alcohol and tobacco use among parish youth.

The WBRHCC has developed an action plan to increase community collaboration and to reduce youth substance use. Community members are encouraged to join the WBRHCC and to take an active role in working to reduce underage drinking and tobacco use in West Baton Rouge. For more information, contact Project Coordinator Toddie Milstead at 225.343.5666 or toddie.milstead@la.gov.

Sewer project brings some Choctaw Road closures

West Baton Rouge Parish has contracted Spinks Construction to install a new sewer system, along with drainage improvements, on Choctaw Road from the Lukeville Extension to Rambin Road. These improvements have been funded by grant dollars. The construction will last approximately three more months.



At times, this project requires the parish to temporarily close one lane of traffic and some individual driveways. Every attempt is being made to minimize any inconvenience to the residents and those traveling on Choctaw Road.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and we would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Call non-emergency # for parish issues

The West Baton Rouge Office of Homeland Security, Emergency Preparedness and 9-1-1 reminds residents that the parish dispatch center can be reached for non-emergency issues after hours at 225-490-8599.

Examples of non-emergency issues that can be reported are trees down in the roadway, and utility issues. This number can also be used to request to speak to a parish official for any other non-emergency issue. To report a life threatening emergency residents should call 9-1-1.

Basketball league registration to begin

Registration for the West Baton Rouge Recreation Department's winter basketball leagues will be held November 2-30. The program is open to all kids age 5 to 12, and the registration fee is \$30.

Registration forms will be provided to students at schools, and can also be printed out from the parish website: www.wbr council.org. The forms and registration fee can be turned into the Recreation Department office at the Port Allen Community Center, or mailed in to: West Baton Rouge Recreation Department, P.O. Box 67, Port Allen, LA, 70767.



Veterans Day Ceremony

“In Honor of Those Who Serve”

11 a.m. November 11

West Baton Rouge Parish
Courthouse

850 8th Street, Port Allen

This ceremony, held annually on Veterans Day, honors those who have served our country in the armed forces. The public is encouraged to attend.

Guest Speaker Warren LeJeune, U.S. Air Force Retired as Major in the Air Force Reserves after 25 years of service

This ceremony is a joint effort of West Baton Rouge Parish, the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Garbage collection schedule for holidays

The following is information about garbage collection schedule for the upcoming holidays:

Thanksgiving, Thursday, Nov. 26, 2015

Carts -- No service on Thanksgiving Day, next service Monday, Nov. 30
Bulky pickup and recycling collection not affected by Thursday holiday.

Christmas Day, Friday, Dec. 25, 2015

Carts--No service on Christmas Day, next service Tuesday, Dec. 29
Bulky pickup and recycling collection not affected by Friday holiday.
Special out of cart collection:
Tuesday, Dec. 29 in Port Allen and Erwinville areas
Wednesday, Dec. 30 in Addis and Brusly areas

New Years Day, Friday, Jan. 1, 2016

Carts--No service on New Years Day, next service on Tuesday, Jan. 5
Bulky pickup and recycling collection not affected by Friday holiday.
Special out of cart collection:
Tuesday, Jan. 5 in Port Allen and Erwinville areas
Wednesday, Jan. 6 in Addis and Brusly areas



TOWN OF ADDIS

Addis Centennial gets rave reviews

The Town of Addis Centennial Celebration was a huge success, with thousands of attendees enjoying great musical performers, a night parade, fireworks display, kids rides and games, food, art show, cook-off, and historical exhibits over the 2-day event.

"We tried to give our community an event worthy of 100 years," said Mayor David Toups. "This event would not have been possible without all those who have served the community of Addis in the past and the present, especially the current Town Council and their spouses – Thank You!"

Toups also extended the town's thanks to the event sponsors, the Centennial Committee, and all those who provided entertainment, food, beverage, security, transportation, airing the LSU football game, fireworks, maintaining the appearance of the venue, arts and crafts, and many other services. Special thanks were extended to Tate Acosta, Rhonda LeBlanc Kelly, Jade Simpson, and Kiedi Mabile for their tireless volunteer efforts in staging this huge event.

"100 years and Addis Proud!," said Toups.



Shown are scenes from the Town of Addis Centennial Celebration, held September 11 and 12. Numerous activities drew big crowds both days of the celebration.

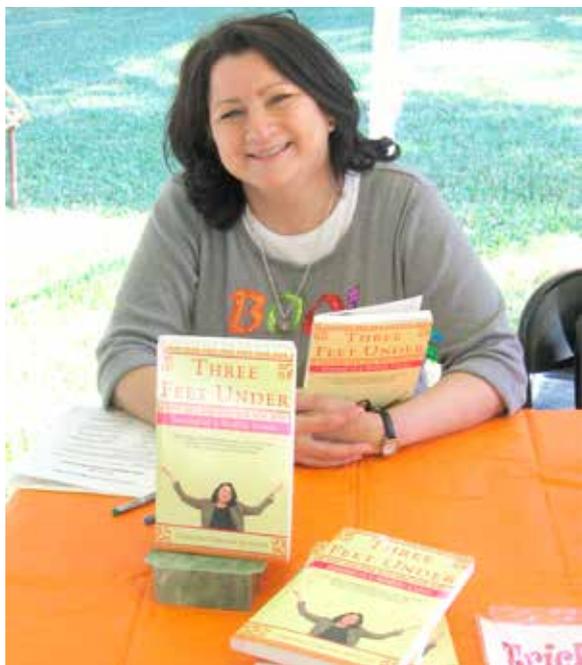


Meetings:

Addis Mayor & Town Council - 1st Wednesday of each month - Town Hall - 6:00 P.M.
Addis Planning & Zoning - 3rd Tuesday of each month - Town Hall - 6:00 P.M.
Addis Historical Society - 2nd Tuesday of each month - Addis Museum - 5:30 P.M.

WEST BATON ROUGE LIBRARY

WBR library partnerships work!



WBR Library will host Christee Gabour Atwood, author of Three Feet Under: Journal of a Mid-Life Crisis, and In Celebration of Elastic Waistbands and other books on Nov. 19

West Baton Rouge Parish Library and the West Baton Rouge Museum partner each year to present Halloween Fun for all ages on the grounds of the Museum and inside the Port Allen Community Center.

This year's event was held on the evening of October 16th. The Library offered a high-energy performance by "Farmer Jason" with his rock-and-roll, sing-along show, followed by the amazing "Was That for Real?" by magician/illusionist Chris Miller. Both shows were held in the Community Center.

The Library also partnered with the Louisiana Small Business Development Center to offer a free marketing seminar,

"Energize Your Business with Marketing that Gets Results!" on October 22.

NEW BOOKS...

West Baton Rouge Parish Library has recently received new books from The Libri Foundation valued at more than \$1,400. The Rotary Club of Port Allen supported the Library's grant by securing an anonymous donation as part of the application. An additional bonus of math and science books was made possible by Libri Foundation supporters Bill Strawbridge and Meg Wallhagen. The books will be used on the bookmobile to serve WBR schools.

HUMORIST, AUTHOR COMING TO WBR...

The Library will host "Celebrating Louisiana Writers" on Thursday, November 19, 2015. Humorist, award-winning author, and business trainer Christee Gabour Atwood will lead the attendees on a rollicking adventure beginning at 10:30 a.m.

"Celebrating Louisiana Writers" is an annual Library event in partnership with the West Side Women's Club. It is free and open to the public, and everyone is invited to enjoy the program.

For more information on these activities and more go to: www.wbrpl.com



TOWN OF BRUSLY

Handling of derelict properties gets state notice

Tall grass, junk cars, and derelict buildings can wreck property values in neighborhoods. That's one reason the Town of Brusly has a pro-active policy of handling these cases, and a strong nuisance ordinance to back it up.

In fact, the town's program is so successful that the Louisiana Municipal Association (LMA) is studying Brusly's policies and ordinance for use as a model for other Louisiana municipalities, since all struggle with this problem.

"We learned that contacting property owners with a phone call or visit as the first step in getting these cases resolved is the most effective way to handle it," said Mayor Joey Normand.

"Before a property owner gets a written notification that an issue on the property must be addressed, we always try to make personal contact to explain why action is needed. We've found that many times

personal contact is all it takes to get property owners to take care of problems."

Normand said the Town of Brusly now has relatively few nuisance ordinance cases annually because it has worked hard to address the issues in the past. "We went through a bunch of houses in the past, but now we only have about 2 to 3 cases a year, and it's rare that the town has to take legal action," he said. "We have about a dozen tall grass cases a year, and about half a dozen cases of junk cars needing to be moved from property annually."

The Town of Brusly usually steps in when grass gets more than a foot high, when cars sit on property and have no inspection sticker or license; and when residences or buildings have broken out windows and are in an obvious state of disrepair. If no action is taken after the



This residence in Brusly was once on the town's derelict properties list. After working with the property owner, it was renovated and is now a beautiful home.

personal contact, a certified letter is sent. If the property owner is still unresponsive, then the matter goes to the Town Council for action.

"The Town Council has been very supportive of enforcing the town's policies and ordinance, and that has helped us maintain an orderly town," Normand noted. "By the time a case gets to the Council, they know we have tried everything to resolve the issue."

"Every case is different, so you have to handle them individually,"

he said. "There can be many reasons why a property owner has not mowed the grass, or allowed a residence or building to become dilapidated. "There can be economic issues, or illnesses, or succession issues," he said. "It can become very complicated, but we try to work with the property owners. As long as they are working in good faith to rectify the issue, there is no need to send them a certified letter threatening action by the town."

CITY OF PORT ALLEN

Natural gas pipeline a win-win for industry, city

Port Allen is getting great news on both economic development and public safety fronts, and more city infrastructure improvements are on the way, said Mayor Richard Lee.

The city is working with three industrial companies in a joint agreement to extend the city's natural gas service to their facilities. The extension of the 8-inch line will cost approximately \$1.6 million, and will be funded by the companies. "This will be a dedicated gas line to meet their needs, but the city will own it once complete," said Mayor Lee. "It will also significantly increase their natural gas usage, which will provide additional city revenues."

The joint agreement is with Louis Dryfus, United Postal Service (UPS), and Genesis Energy, noted Chief Administrative Officer Adrian Genre. He said Louis Dryfus is installing a huge dryer at its facility at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge, and will need increased natural gas capacity to operate the dryer.

In addition, Genesis needs gas for its operations at the port; and UPS is switching all of its vehicles to natural gas fuel. "Genesis and UPS will be new customers for us," he said. Genre said

the final paperwork is being completed, and the city will go out for bids in early 2016 on the line extension from its facility off La. Hwy. 415 to the Port.

\$25,000 grant to fund police unit laptops

The Port Allen Police Department has also received a \$25,000 grant for the purchase of computers for all police patrol vehicles. Mayor Lee said 16 computers are being purchased, and will allow officers to file reports while being out in the community, and have other benefits. The city is also considering purchasing body cameras for officers.

More sidewalks to be poured this fall

Plans are in the works for pouring concrete sidewalks on the following streets: Avenue C from 14th Street to Pacific Street, Pacific Street to Avenue B, 10th Street, 11th Street, 12th Street and 13th Street between La. Avenue and Michigan Avenue.

Work is expected to begin on this project in November. In other city news, a tree trimming project to raise branches to regulation height over roads has been completed.

Mayor Lee said the city has made a formal request to the La. Department of Transportation and Development that repairs be made to the roadway on La. Hwy. 1 at Avenue G. "It needs repairs, but this is a state roadway," he said, noting some residents have complained about the condition of the intersection.

WEST BATON ROUGE TOURISM

With this year's "Oldies But Goodies Fest" drawing large crowds to West Baton Rouge Parish last month, Convention and Visitors Bureau officials are expecting increased attendance at upcoming events.

"The Fest's numbers were up from last year. We had record-breaking number of antique cars. It was a huge success," according to West Baton Rouge Tourism Director Sharon Stam, who estimates about 6,000-7,000 visitors attended the two-day event.

VETERANS ON PARADE - NOV. 8

Now, she and her staff are focusing on the Annual Veterans on Parade, scheduled for Nov. 8 in downtown Port Allen.

"This parade honors all veterans, past and present, for their service. We're asking once again for their names to put on their float. In addition, we want to fill a float with items to ship to our troops overseas, in conjunction with the Blue Star Mothers organization," Stam says.

The parade begins at 1:30 p.m. and travels down Jefferson Avenue to the Courthouse with marching bands and floats.

Locations where items can be dropped off are located around the parish. To find items needed for the troops or to register to participate in the parade, Stam suggests visiting the website at www.westbatonrouge.net.

Attractions promise to please crowds



Scenes from last year's Reflections of the Season

New fun added for Reflections of Season

The 7th Annual Reflections of the Season, with nearly \$1 million in exterior lights, will illuminate the Tourist Information and Conference Center from Dec. 3 through Dec. 24.

New fun additions will delight the crowds, including a 6-foot animated polar bear and a human snow globe. "The globe is 15 feet tall and 15 feet around," Stam says. "I think it's going to be a great attraction."

Visitors can enter the inflatable globe and take their own photos from 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday nights (with a \$1 gate ticket). Pictures will also be available for purchase from a professional photographer. Favorites, like the horse drawn wagon rides, carnival rides, crafters, food

vendors, ice fishing and Trevor the Singing Reindeer, will also return.

For those who prefer not drive, a parking and shuttle service will be offered from Louis Mouch Jr. Multi-Purpose Facility from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

On another note, Stam adds that the WBRCVB is receiving an unexpected allocation of \$11,000 from the Gulf Tourism & Seafood Promotional fund grant, which has been designated for upcoming promotions. "It was totally unexpected and appreciated," Stam said.

For more information about upcoming events, visit the website or call (225) 344-2920.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Jamie A. Hanks named new Executive Director of Chamber

The West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce announced it has hired Jamie Hanks as the organization's Executive Director. Hanks comes to West Baton Rouge previously serving as the Director of Legislative Affairs for the Division of Administration for the State of Louisiana. Prior to that role, she served as the Communications Director for former-Congressman Rodney Alexander in Washington D.C. for a number of years. Her experience also includes serving as Coordinator of Government

Programs for the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce.

"We are thrilled to welcome Jamie to West Baton Rouge and are elated with the skill set and vast array of knowledge she brings with her," said Scott Gaudin, Chairman of the Board for the West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce. "Jamie has extensive



experience in numerous areas which not only includes a track record of success at the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, but she also has thorough knowledge of the Capital Outlay process which helps determine the priority of state funding as it relates to road and infrastructure projects in Louisiana."

"West Baton Rouge has

positioned itself as a unique place to work and live by bringing in businesses of all sizes and improving the quality of life for its residents. With an impressive Board of Directors and membership in place, I am eager to begin this new role at the West Baton Rouge Chamber to ensure the parish continues to thrive," said Hanks. "Promoting our businesses, pursuing new economic ventures and serving the best interests of the Chamber are my top priorities."

Chamber GOLF classic
WEST BATON ROUGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Monday, Nov. 2 • 9 a.m. Registration • 10:30 Shotgun start
The Island Country Club Call to register: 225/383-3140

UPCOMING CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED! 225/383-3140 OR bonnie@wbrchamber.org
LOCATION: ADDIS COMMUNITY CENTER, 7520 Hwy 1, Addis
11AM: Registration/Networking 12 Noon: Program begins
\$20: Chamber Members/\$25 Non-Chamber Members

NOVEMBER 18 MEETING
West Baton Rouge School System
Wes Watts, School Superintendent
State of Education
Sponsored by: The Dow Chemical Company



WEST BATON ROUGE ASSESSOR

Property values up only slightly

When leaves start to fall weather and football season kicks off, property owners know that the arrival of tax bills isn't far behind.

they've just been adjusted slightly," Altazan says. "They should expect to pay a little more, but not much more than last year."



The millage rate was adjusted from 84.49 mills in 2014 to 85.88 this year. This means, for example, a citizen who paid \$211.23 in taxes on a \$100,000 assessed home in 2014 will pay \$214.77 this year – just a \$3.54 increase.

West Baton Rouge Parish Assessor Barney "Frog" Altazan says his office tries to get the bills out by the end of October since they are due by Dec. 31, 2015.

And, with the new year, the assessment process begins all over again, Altazan adds, noting the office works year-round preparing for the release of the tax roll information to the tax collector.

"This is regulated by the state statute. It's not that we're trying to put a damper on everyone's holidays," he explains of the year-end deadline.

"We start on Jan. 1 looking for anything that has been completed. We measure, identify and locate properties, be it business or residence. Even new businesses who are leasing have to report their personal property," he explains.

He notes that taxpayers shouldn't expect any surprises in the amount they owe this year.

"Millage rates haven't jumped,

Altazan encourages taxpayers to familiarize themselves with the office's calendar so that they can prepare, file appeals or seek adjustments. Exact dates will be provided in upcoming months, but the following is a general guideline for 2016:

- January – Property assessed as to condition and ownership.
- April – Deadline for filing self-reporting forms for business personal property.
- June – Public hearing to adopt Assessment District millage rate for tax year 2016.
- August – Assessment listings open for review by taxpayers. Deadline for open review of assessment listings by taxpayers.
- September – Assessment roll certified to local Board of Review. Appeal process begins. Board of Review considers any written appeal (with supporting documentation hand delivered or by certified mail) of any taxpayer who has filed a protest at least seven days prior to the final Board of Review hearing date. Deadline for taxpayers to file appeals with Board of Review. Board of Review hears taxpayer protests.
- November – Assessment roll must be filed with the Louisiana Tax Commission.
- Dec. 31, 2015 – Property taxes due and payable by this date.



View your property assessment
See your property on digital aerial maps!
Learn about tax exemptions
Download forms and more!
www.wbrassessor.org



ST. JOHN
INTERPAROCHIAL
SCHOOL

HIGH SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

*Wednesday, October 28, 6 p.m.
St. Clement Chapel, 58725 St. Clement Ave.,
Plaquemine*

Elementary and Middle School tours will be available upon request

- Positive and nurturing environment
- Tradition of academic excellence for 162 years
- Challenging college preparatory curriculum
- ACT prep classes
- Spiritual formation opportunities
- Individualized college and career counseling
- Varied extra-curricular offerings
- Competitive athletic programs
- Technology integrated curriculum
- Advanced placement and honors courses
- Unique experiences, activities and traditions
- Service and leadership opportunities
- Qualified, caring and dedicated faculty

Education - Anchored in Christ

Since 1853 • Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade
225.687.3056 stjohnschool.org



Coffee with the superintendent



Superintendent Wes Watts talks about educational priorities with Port Allen Councilman Hugh Riviere at a recent "Coffee with the Superintendent" session.

Superintendent Wes Watts is kicking off his second year in the job by taking some coffee breaks.

The purpose of the coffee isn't relaxation but to get to know parents and business people throughout the school district. Likewise, Watts wants the public to get to know the school district's leaders. Anyone who would like to meet the superintendent is welcome to come and meet central office administrators. All topics are on the table.

"These are very informal get-togethers. I wanted to find a way to let the community know who we are and answer any questions anyone may have," Watts explained.

So far, the coffees have been held at Court Street Cafe in Port Allen, and Brusly Town Hall, the West Baton Rouge Museum, Addis Town Hall and Cajun Circus Cafe in Port Allen. All coffees are from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

"Come share a cup of coffee and hear how our schools are 'making awesome happen'," Watts says. "We also want citizens to share their hopes for the future."

Watts hopes to announce more locations in the near future, and encourages the public to check the district's web site for more information. He is also planning to offer meetings with a "town hall" format after business hours for those who can't make the early morning coffees.

Devall principal seeks post on BESE Board

(Note: this publication went to press prior to the Oct. 24 election.)

With 29 years of experience, Devall Middle School Principal Laree Taylor is making a bid to apply her professional skills as a member of the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

"I've wanted to be a teacher since my early childhood," Taylor shares. "For the past 29 years, as a teacher, district specialist, and school administrator/principal, I have been fortunate enough to work with students and educators to realize that dream. Now, I have an incredible opportunity to help children all across the state as a member of the BESE."

If elected, Taylor says she would draw on her background and experiences to "promote a shared vision for better schools, more choices and greater opportunities for children."

Now in her third year as Duvall's principal, Taylor previously served as a district curriculum specialist for



Devall Middle School Principal Laree Taylor

West Feliciana Schools and as a project coordinator for the Louisiana Board of Regents. She has also worked as a high school instructor in East Baton Rouge Parish School System and was a Louisiana High School Teacher of the Year finalist.

"We are really excited for Laree and are proud to have someone from our district seeking this position," notes Superintendent Wes Watts.

All eight elected seats on BESE will be decided on the Oct. 24 ballot. Taylor is running for the 6th District seat that board president Chas Roemer is vacating. She faces competition from Kathy Edmonston, Gonzales; Jason Engen, Baton Rouge; Jason France, Baton Rouge; and Etta Licciardi, Loranger.

The governor gets three state school board appointments, in addition to the eight elected members. The runoff is Nov. 21.

Teachers get motivation to move from good to great

A national authority on leadership and motivational techniques shared some practical ways to "move from good to great" at the West Baton Rouge School District's back-to-school convocation in August.

Todd Whitaker, an author of more than 40 publications about education, was the convocation's keynote speaker. Whitaker is a professor of educational leadership at Indiana State University, and has served as a principal and administrator.

"I've always said that this district is a good one. So, we thought it would be a great way to begin the school year by hearing this presentation on 'what great teachers do differently,' based on Whitaker's book," said Superintendent Wes Watts. "Who better to motivate our educators than someone who has been in their shoes?"

According to Dawn Henry,

Supervisor of Secondary Education, Whitaker did an "incredible" job of encouraging the group of about 600 at the West Baton Rouge Parish Convention and Visitors Bureau. Among those attending were teachers, principals, administrators and school board members.

"Everything he said applies to us today. He was the most entertaining speaker I've ever heard and I've been in education for 32 years," Henry shared. "He motivated us to do something different."

Watts presented administrators copies of Whitaker's book, "Shifting the Monkey: The Art of Protecting Good People From Liars, Criers, and Other Slackers" - a book on school leadership and teacher performance.

The management book is for leaders who want to reinvigorate their culture and reward hard work and dedication.



Motivational speaker and author Todd Whitaker shares leadership tips with West Baton Rouge School administrators, teachers and principals.