

City working with legislators to resolve "Tar-Pam Rules" issues

As its Mission Statement attests, the City of Washington pledges "to plan and manage growth in harmony with our natural surroundings of the river and the estuary." Over the years numerous City projects like wastewater treatment upgrades, storm drain stenciling, hazardous waste collections, and creation of a stormwater wetland have borne out that commitment. Now City officials are working with state legislators to find a way to implement new urban stormwater regulations to protect the Tar and Pamlico rivers without hurting Washington's economy.

Washington and 10 other local governments fall under new regulations called the "Tar-Pam Rules." These rules restrict the amount of nutrients that can wash off urban areas and into the rivers. High nutrient levels degrade water quality, cause algae blooms, and endanger aquatic life. Washington City Council has delayed enacting the state's new regulations due to several concerns about the ability of local governments to make the rules work.

City officials feel that some Tar-Pam provisions are unenforceable. For instance, cities have no authority through state law to enforce laws other than planning and zoning regulations outside of the city limits, and the Tar-Pam rules charge cities with that responsibility. City officials also feel that the rules place a greater burden for protecting water quality on small municipalities that have fewer resources to pay for engineers and other enforcement requirements, leaving smaller cities no choice but to pass along the enforcement costs to developers and property owners. Some requirements would prohibit development that otherwise would have been appropriate in an urbanized or commercial area.

City officials have been working with the other municipalities and counties that fall under the Tar-Pam rules and Senator

Marc Basnight's office to resolve these issues and make these new rules work.

\$1 million grant to target 100 block of West Main Street

The City has been awarded a \$1 million Urban Renewal Redevelopment Grant to support several projects to boost Downtown Washington's economy. Chief among these projects will be restoration of the old Louise Hotel apartment house to create The George Inn, a 30-room hotel with a restaurant and spa. Up to \$750,000 of the grant is earmarked as a loan to developers of The George to help finance renovation. Money repaid toward the loan will be rolled over into a revolving loan fund to finance future downtown building improvements under oversight from a City-appointed loan review board. Of the remaining \$250,000 of the grant, \$130,000 is set aside to help property owners in the 100 block of West Main Street pay for façade and building improvements. The remaining \$120,000 will go toward the City's costs of monitoring compliance with grant requirements.

Construction of The George project is expected to start later this year to meet a projected July 2006 opening date.

No more post card "light bills"!

The City of Washington is trading the old post card style "light bill" for a monthly statement for Municipal & Utility Services. The new format improves information flow to customers by providing more detailed explanations about your services and with informative brochures. Statements are mailed in envelopes to protect customer privacy. Each statement includes information about utility usage patterns and daily costs for the service address. The statements also will include a return envelope for the customer to use when mailing in a payment.

Washington celebrates 100 years in the electric business

In 2005 the City of Washington marks 100 years of serving the homes, businesses and industries of the Pamlico area with electricity. All over North Carolina, cities and towns like Washington built electric systems to serve their citizens in the early 20th century at a time when investor-owned utilities did not provide service to rural areas and before the organization of electric cooperatives. In 1903 the Washington citizens voted 406 to 1 to build an electric system. Washington's lights came on for the first time on Jan. 19, 1905, powered by electricity produced locally in the first of three City-owned power plants. Today Washington produces electricity as part-owner of power plants on the Progress Energy system. Recognition of the 100th anniversary will culminate with a public event in October 2005.

Human Relations Council to advance community relations

The Human Relations Council is now active again in Washington. Members represent different ages, races, occupations, genders and income levels that are characteristic of our community. This group's mission is to encourage good community relations and to identify community needs primarily in regards to groups of people. It is empowered to hold public meetings or forums or otherwise spread information and communicate with the public to advance human understanding and to report findings and recommendations for improving community relations to City. One of its first activities will be sponsoring a breakfast seminar on NC Fair Housing laws for local real estate agents, landlords and property owners on April 20 at the Washington Senior Resources Center. The Human Relations Council meets the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Senior Resources Center.

Police initiatives address key concerns in community

Washington Police Department has undertaken several initiatives in the past several months to address key concerns in the community. Among them are:

Church Watch. The Crime Prevention Division has started "Church Watch." Church leaders and members of participating churches receive information about preventing crime and looking out for church and community property. Churches interested in joining "Church Watch" should contact Lt. William Chrismon at 948-9444.

Traffic Safety. Four officers now assigned full-time to the new Traffic Enforcement Division are promoting safe driving by increasing enforcement of traffic laws inside the city limits. The effort has been made possible in part by a \$10,000 grant from the Governor's Highway Safety program to help with vehicle and equipment costs.

Community Policing. Community policing has been revived in Washington. Officers provide intensified interaction and attention to assigned neighborhoods in the city with the goal of partnering with residents to prevent crime. Community Police is a program of the Crime Prevention Division.

Historic resources now available over the internet

Brown Library, Beaufort County Community College's Learning Resources Center and Historic Bath have launched a new website where the general public can view scholarly, informative, and historical resources significant to our region, such as old maps, research reports, photographs, colonial and maritime records, and objects in special or rare collections. Brown Library is known for its collection of documents and artifacts pertaining to Washington's early history. Brown Library staff has been preparing 200 items for the website, located at <http://circaNCEast.beaufortccc.edu/>. The project has been funded by an NC ECHO Digitization Grant with additional support from Friends of Brown Library.

Warren Field Airport now solely-owned by City

Beaufort County has transferred its half ownership in Warren Field Airport to the City of Washington. Airport operations are now the sole responsibility of the City.

Gift to library to buy shelving

Brown Library has received a \$5,000 grant from the Washington Women's Club in honor of Elizabeth Gibbs. The money will be used for shelving in the Children's Story Time area.

Library ranks highly

Brown Library is 6th out of 76 North Carolina Public Libraries on the most recent Hannon American Public Library ranking.

New City regs require animals to be restrained in truck beds

Among the requirements of a revised animal control law that went into effect in the City of Washington on March 15 is for animals to be properly restrained or confined when riding in an open vehicle to prevent them from being thrown, falling or jumping from the vehicle. Appropriate restraint includes confinement in a dog box or carrier attached securely to the vehicle or using two leashes to tether the animal from each side of the truck bed.

The new laws list specific requirements for animal care and make it illegal to abandon an animal. Persons keeping, feeding or harboring stray animals must either call animal control immediately to pick up the animal or assume ownership by obtaining vet care and rabies shots for the animal within 72 hours. The law restricts leaving animals unattended in motor vehicles under conditions harmful to their health and well-being and allows Animal Control or a Police officer to break into a vehicle to remove an animal showing signs of heat or cold stress. The animal control officer may now confiscate an animal if its owner violates animal control laws. The law also makes distinctions between potentially dangerous, dangerous and vicious animals and establishes an Animal Control Appeals Board to provide due process to owners of animals that have been declared potentially dangerous, dangerous or vicious by the animal control officer.

Get your IBX here!

Washington is the Heart of North Carolina's Inner Banks. Proudly show your support for our area by displaying an IBX decal or license plate on your vehicles or wearing an IBX t-shirt. The oval black & white decals are \$3 and license plates are \$7. T-shirts are available in white, citrus, and blue for \$15 (\$18 XXL). These items can be purchased at the Washington Visitor

Center, 102 Stewart Parkway on the waterfront in Downtown Washington.

Washington sites are part of NC Civil War Trail

Three sites in Washington are on North Carolina's Civil War Trail, Carolinas Campaign: End of the War. Interpretive signs located at Oakdale Cemetery near the Confederate Memorial, on the west end of Stewart Parkway near the submerged wreck of the USS Picket, and near the Estuarium facing the Marsh House explain the historic significance of Washington's role in the Civil War. The Washington Tourism Development Authority funded the signage and markers. Visit www.visitnc.com for additional sites and information.

Mark your calendar . . .

- **Sports sign-ups.** Sign-ups for Adult Co-Ed Softball and Senior Babe Ruth Baseball will be in early May at Parks and Recreation.
- **Summer recreation programs.** Registration for children's summer programs offered by Parks and Recreation will be May 2-13.
- **Summer reading programs.** Registration for Brown Library's popular summer reading program will be in May.
- **Bulky trash pick up.** The City will pick up bulky items from residences from May 10-13. Have these items next to the street on your neighborhood collection day.
- **Yard waste disposal.** Loose leaves pick up is over until November. Place leaves and other yard waste in bags or containers for pickup on your neighborhood collection day. Please help control flooding by keeping these items out of streets, gutters, ditches and storm drains.
- **Boat dock reservations.** Parks & Recreation is taking advance registration for space at the boat docks during Summer Festival, which will be held June 10-11 this year. Call 975-9367, ext. 221 to reserve space.

City Scene

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City information also available from

- City 9 (Cox Cable)
- www.Washington-NC.com