

REMINDERS

October is Fire Prevention Month



The WBR Fire Department reminds residents to change smoke detector batteries this month, test smoke alarms, and practice home fire safety drills!

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS COLLECTION
OCT 31 | 8AM-12PM

ALEXANDER PARK
250 Elaine Street | Brusly, LA

Halloween Trick or Treat

Saturday, Oct. 31
5:30 - 7:30 pm
across the parish

Election Day

Tuesday, November 3
Wear face mask
PLEASE VOTE!

Administration, Parish Council roll back tax millage, save property owners \$1.024 million

The Parish Council has approved the recommendation by Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot that the parish roll back its property tax millage rate, a move that will save parish property owners approximately \$1.024 million. The 2 mill roll-back means the parish will collect property taxes on 30.07 mills, rather than 32.07 mills. It will collect \$512,318 less in drainage tax, and \$512,318 less for the maintenance and operation of the community centers.

"This is a reassessment year, and property values went up, so taxes are increasing for many property owners at a time when they may be struggling with the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic," explained Berthelot. "We took a hard look at our fund balances, and felt confident that we can operate effectively without the additional funds of rolling forward this year. We will review the finances annually, and determine if roll-backs are feasible each year, but we felt it was a good way to help our property owners, especially this year."

Assessors around the state are required to reassess property values every four years, and values went up in West Baton Rouge. When property values increase, it also increases the property taxes. Government agencies can choose whether to roll forward millages, which allows the agencies to levy the maximum voter-approved millages. This means they collect higher property taxes. Or they can choose to roll back millages, which reduces property taxes.

Completion nears for new water line to Addis



Shown is the construction of a new 20-inch water main which will extend from Brusly to Addis, increasing water pressure and capacity to the southern end of the parish.

A comprehensive, phased water improvement project is winding its way to completion, with the parish presently running a new 16-inch water main from Brusly to Addis. This new line will increase water capacity to the Addis area by early 2021.

Other phases of the \$5 million project that are now complete include the construction of a new water well at the Louis Mouch Multipurpose Arena, connection of a water line from the well to the water main at the Intracoastal Waterway, and the extension of a new, larger water main from the Intracoastal Waterway to W. St. Francis Street in Brusly.

In addition, the parish is currently upgrading a 2-inch water main to an 8-inch water main from just south of Parker Lane to the Addis water tower. That project is almost complete.

While installing the water line, the parish also has been adding a natural gas main to provide better natural gas pressure at the end of the parish. These projects will greatly improve these services to the southern end of West Baton Rouge Parish.

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WBR PARISH COUNCIL - Meets 2nd & 4th Thursday of month, 5:30 p.m., Parish Council Building, 225-383-4755, www.wbrCouncil.org

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

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

WBR BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS - Meets 3rd Tuesday of month. 5 p.m., Council meeting room in Parish Council Building.

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

CITY OF PORT ALLEN - Committee meetings - 1st Wednesday of month, 5:30 p.m. Council meetings - 2nd Wednesday of month, 5:30 p.m. Port Allen City Hall 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., Brusly Town Hall - 225-749-2909, www.bruslyla.com

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Museum sets end of year activities

HISTORIC MAGNOLIA CEMETERY: Authors Faye Phillips and Chip Landry will be the guest speakers for the West Baton Rouge Historical Association's annual Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture Series on Sunday, November 1, at 2:30 p.m. They will speak on historic Magnolia Cemetery. A reception and book signing will follow their presentation.

On this All Saints Day, hear about the history of the land on the eastern edge of Baton Rouge dotted with magnolia trees that was purchased by the government in the mid-19th century to serve as a resting place for families of all races, religious affiliations, and economic status. A Civil War battle was also fought on this site, where Confederate and Union soldiers died.

This lecture series is held annually in memory of Ethel Claiborne Dameron, founder of the West Baton Rouge Historical Association and West Baton Rouge Museum. This program is free and open to the public. Masks will be required, and social distancing protocol will be practiced.

WALK AMONGST YOUR ACADIAN ANCESTORS:

Dr. Jason Theriot, historian and author, will give a presentation titled "Walk Amongst Your Acadian Ancestors" during the regularly scheduled Café français program Friday, November 6 at 1 p.m. Dr. Theriot details his journey to locate his family's ancestral homestead in Nova Scotia, Canada. For additional information, contact Gwenn LaViolette at 225.336.2422 ext. 201 or via email at gwenn@wbrmuseum.org.

BRACELET MAKING WORKSHOP:

Baton Rouge jeweler Pamela Smith of Wristful Thinking will provide a free Bracelet Making Workshop on Sunday, November

15 from 2 – 3 p.m. Space is limited, and advanced reservations are encouraged by calling (225)336-2422 Ext. 200. Masks are required, and social distancing will be practiced.

Smith is a Baton Rouge native and a graduate of Southern University. She designs unique bracelets made of charms, colorful stones, and glass beads.

KOREAN WAR LECTURE:

The Korean War will be the topic of the November 18 lunchtime lecture at noon. Baton Rouge attorney, Gary Ethridge will provide an overview of the war and show artifacts in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War. This program is free and open to the public. Masks will be required.

Holiday Open House

Celebrate the season with a French flair at the WBR Museum Holiday Open House is Sunday, December 6, from 2 - 4 p.m.

Visitors of all ages will enjoy an elf scavenger hunt, apple cider and gingerbread, ornament making, traditional craft demonstrations, a visit from Père Noël, musical performances, and merriment. Visitors will also learn about Cajun and Creole seasonal folkways, traditions, and songs.

Visitors should wear masks and stay six feet apart. Many of the activities will be held in open air spaces. This program is free and open to the public.

FUNDRAISER DRAWING

BENEFITTING THE WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

1ST PRIZE
AN ORIGINAL SIGNED & FRAMED BURNY MYRICK WATERCOLOR

Winners may select from available watercolors in the exhibit

other prizes include original framed art by Grover Cleveland Stuart and Beth Watson, signed and numbered Burny Myrick prints, an autographed copy of *The Timeless River: A Portrait of Life on the Mississippi 1850-1900* by Burny Myrick, and more

Drawing Ticket \$50

Drawing on November 1, 2020 at the ECD Lecture

WBR Library is now open!

The West Baton Rouge Library is now open Friday 8:30 am -5:30 pm and Saturday 9 am-1 pm. Visit in person or virtually. Explore the extensive eBook, audiobook, magazine, newspaper, and video library.

Upcoming Holiday Closures:

- Veteran's Day – Wednesday, November 11th
- Thanksgiving – November 26th -November 28th
- Christmas – December 23rd at 12:30 pm - December 26th

Storytime - Tuesdays at 10 am. Call (225) 342-7920 Ext. 231 to register.

WBR is now offering Large Print youth titles. Students struggling to read should try large print. Large print can improve student reading skills and confidence. The larger font size can be especially helpful for students with ADD/ADHD or dyslexia. In a recent study, three out of four teachers said students reading below grade level showed better comprehension and retention with large print books.

Need Help with Homework? Visit www.homeworkla.org for free one-to-one online tutoring and homework assistance from 2 pm to midnight, 7 days a week.

It's all included with your card.

Do you want to learn how to use our online resources like OverDrive, hoopla, TumbleBook Library, and more? Niche Academy tutorials include video instruction and printable, step-by-step guides. Watch from your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Check out Niche Academy's quick and easy tutorials for straightforward steps and get started.

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Need a hand with homework? We can help!

Free Tutoring — Online, On Demand

Sign up for your FREE account today!



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.



NEW SWING SETS COMING TO PARKS... Children can enjoy new swing set additions at Alexander Park in Brusly and Erwinville Park soon! They will be installed by mid-November. The same swing set additions will be added at Rivault Park in Port Allen and Myhand Park in Addis in 2021. They feature a variety of swinging options, including a zipline swing.



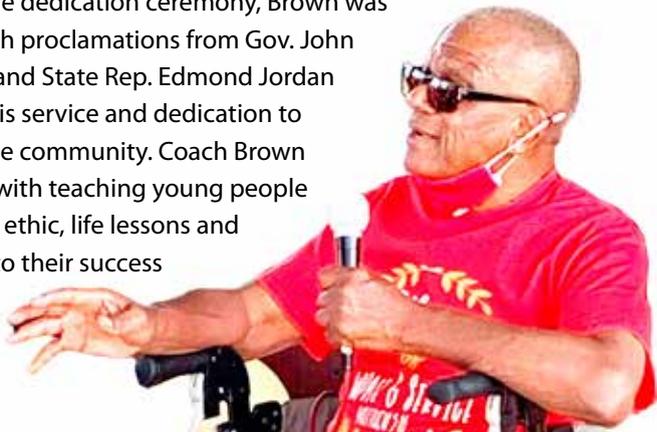
RECREATION PROGRAMS BACK IN FULL SWING.. The 2020 fall recreation programs are back and in full swing! The flag football league includes more than 250 flag football players from ages 4 to 10, and the soccer league has more than 250 players from age 3-12! The teams will be competing in a shortened season that began in early October and will end in mid-November. WBR Parks and Recreation will begin registration for the biddy basketball league in late November. It is open to boys and girls age 5 to 12.

Field dedicated to Roland Brown

The baseball field at Lukeville Park was dedicated to honor long-time coach Roland Brown on October 3. Brown is beloved for teaching and coaching track, baseball and basketball at Cohn High School and Brusly High School, and coaching other teams.

He was the first African American coach in West Baton Rouge Parish schools, and served as principal of three schools - Port Allen Middle School, Chamberlin and Devall Middle. In addition, he was director of Lukeville Park, establishing several ball teams for boys and girls there, including the Lukeville Reds.

During the dedication ceremony, Brown was presented with proclamations from Gov. John Bell Edwards and State Rep. Edmond Jordan recognizing his service and dedication to youths and the community. Coach Brown was credited with teaching young people a strong work ethic, life lessons and contributing to their success as adults.



Coach Roland Brown

Smart meter phase-in begins

The WBR Parish Utilities Office is beginning the phase-in of its smart meter switch-out for water service, with the installation of 52 meters in Fairview Subdivision. Smart meters are digital meters that wirelessly provide secure meter readings to a computer.

They are considered more accurate, more reliable and much quicker than traditional meter reading. In addition, they provide more information on usage to residents. Beginning on January 1, 2021, all new construction will be required to have smart meters. The parish will continue to phase-in usage of the meters each year until all meters are changed out.

New water rates effective Jan. 1

The charges for water usage in West Baton Rouge will change effective January 1, with most residents experiencing a very slight increase in charges of less than \$1 per month. For example, an average home water usage of 6,000 gallons will pay \$19.05 under the new rates, just 50 cents more than the existing rates.

The primary change is a new, simplified rate structure, as follows:
 \$8.65 for 0-2,000 gallons (this is a \$1 increase);
 \$2.60 per 1,000 gallons for 2,001 to 10,000 gallons; and
 .75 cents per 1,000 gallons for over 10,000 gallons of water used.

Commercial rates will be \$25.31 for 0-10,000 gallons used, and .75 cents per 1,000 gallons for over 10,000 gallons used.

The industrial rate was .60 cents per 1,000 gallons, and will go to .75 per 1,000 gallons.

Utility payment drop off options

The parish has closed the drive-thru utility office at 158 E. St. Francis Street in Brusly, but residents can still drop their utility payments in the drop-box located at that building. Another drop-box location is provided at Addis Town Hall. Payments to the drop-boxes are collected daily. Residents with any other business with the Utility Office should go to the main office in the West Baton Rouge Governmental Building on 880 North Alexander Street in Port Allen. A drive-thru window is provided at the main office.

Household Hazardous Materials Collection	ACCEPTED		
	ACIDS AEROSOL CANS ARSENIC AUTO PRODUCTS INCLUDING: used oil, antifreeze, brake fluid, diesel, oil & fuel filters COOKING OIL BATTERIES INCLUDING: NiCD, lead acid, alkaline, rechargeable BLEACH, BOWL CLEANERS BUG SPRAYS WOOD PRESERVATIVES CLEANING SOLVENTS PAPER SHREDDING	CORROSIVE CLEANERS DEGREASERS DISINFECTANTS ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT PAINT THINNER PAINT INCLUDING: latex and oil, stain, varnish, shellac FLUORESCENT TUBES AND COMPACT FLUORESCENT BULBS LAWN AND GARDEN PRODUCTS INCLUDING: pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, fertilizer GLUE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS	LIGHTER FLUID METALLIC MERCURY MOTH BALLS OVEN CLEANERS DRAIN CLEANERS TURPENTINE POLISHES POOL CHEMICALS TVS, STEREO AUTOMOBILE TIRES (5 without rims) PROPANE TANKS AND BOTTLES
	NOT ACCEPTED		
AMMUNITION, EXPLOSIVES FIREWORKS NON-RESIDENTIAL WASTE RADIOACTIVE DEVICES (smoke/fire detectors) SCHOOL LAB WASTE	LARGE GAS CYLINDERS INCLUDING: helium, freon or acetylene STYROFOAM INCLUDING: peanuts CONSTRUCTION/DEMOLITION DEBRIS	APPLIANCES/FURNITURE POWER TOOLS ALL LIQUIDS IN CONTAINERS LARGER THAN 5 GALLONS MEDICAL WASTE/ ALL MEDICINES	

NOTICE - Help maintain water quality

We need YOUR HELP maintaining our water quality in West Baton Rouge Parish. In cooperation with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, we monitor and protect our stormwater for your safety and benefit. We are asking everyone to help us monitor and protect our surface and groundwater by taking the following actions:

- Please properly dispose of all solid, household, business and pet waste using appropriate solid waste containers and methods
- Please DO NOT dispose of any solid or liquid wastes into our stormwater ditches, catch basins or other infrastructure
- Report any known or suspected stormwater pollution to our office (225-336-2434) so that we can investigate
- Consider household gardening and landscaping projects that help promote pollutant removal from rainwater runoff. For a list of these sorts of projects, please contact our office (225-336-2434) or the Louisiana Cooperative Extension office (225-336-2416)
- Please conserve household and business water usage
- Contact our Keep West Baton Rouge Beautiful office (225-490-8549) and offer to volunteer for stream cleanup days or to serve on a Clean Water Stakeholder Group

Let's all work together to protect our water for today and for tomorrow!

Sheriff's Office graduates 22 new corrections officers, auxiliary deputies



A corrections officer gets his certificate of graduation from Training Director Tommy Schiro.

The West Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office graduated 22 corrections officers and auxiliary deputies from its 50-hour training class in October. The training, done at the Sheriff's Office training facility, included basic law enforcement training on firearms, laws, self defense, procedures and reports, first aid and more.

The corrections officers will move into jobs at the parish's Detention Center and the auxiliary officers provide assistance with search and rescue, events, traffic control and other Sheriff's Office activities.



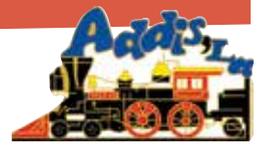
Safety urged for Halloween trick-or-treat

The West Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office will have additional patrols on duty Halloween night, but parents are urged to be sure their children are safe while trick-or-treating. Here are tips to help:

- Always accompany young children. Parents should know the route of older children going alone, and specify a time when they should return home.
- Everyone should have working flashlights, and review making 911 safety calls
- Only go to homes with a porch light on, and never enter a home or car for a treat.
- Remember face masks and reflective tape for costumes and trick-or-treat bags.
- Carry a cell phone for quick communication.
- Bring hand sanitizer and avoid touching your face.
- Don't dig in candy bowls or share candies.
- Maintain social distancing as much as possible.

Helping our neighbors in Lake Charles

West Baton Rouge Sheriff Mike Cazes and 18-20 WBR deputies spent time helping patrol and cooking meals for first responders, law enforcement and others in the Lake Charles region after Hurricane Laura. The deputies rotated patrols in Beauregard and Calcasieu Parishes, assisting with security and debris removal. The Sheriff's cooking team, working with other volunteers, cooked more than 15,000 meals in a week for the devastated area. Just weeks later, Hurricane Delta hit and the Sheriff's Office doubled patrols in West Baton Rouge and worked through the storm, providing both security and traffic control as parish crews moved tree limbs off roadways. Sheriff Cazes thanked the parish for an outstanding job during and after the storm.



Cazes, Acosta bow out of another term on Council

The Addis Town Council will have a new look in January, with at least two new Council members. Hook Cazes and Tate Acosta did not seek re-election to another term in the November 3 election.

Cazes is a 28-year veteran of the Council, presently serving his seventh term! He is 72 years old, and said it's time for him to slow down and spend more time with his family, and enjoying fishing and hunting.



Council Member Hook Cazes

Acosta is at the end of his second term in office, and said he recently moved outside the Addis town limits, so he cannot seek re-election.

Cazes originally served on the town Planning and Zoning Commission when he was asked to run for a Council seat by Harry Landry and Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot, who was then an Addis Council Member. Cazes decided to run, and has had a front-row seat to Addis' tremendous growth in the last 28 years.

"I liked it because I got to work with different people and help solve problems," he said. He counts the town's "new" sewer treatment facility, with its capacity and strategic lift stations; the La. Hwy. 1 lighting project, and the upgrades to Addis' streets as the most significant achievements of his time in office.

"The town is still growing," he said. "We have a lot to offer in West Baton Rouge. I want the residents to know I appreciate their support and wish the new Council well."

Acosta moved to Addis to live with a friend, and "fell in love with the place. It was a real change for me - the great schools, community, recreation. I bought a townhouse in Sugar Mill." He got to know more people coaching baseball for six years, and when he was elected to the Council he used his expertise in road construction and development to help upgrade the town's infrastructure as the town has continued to grow. He noted that other communities do not have the infrastructure that Addis and West Baton Rouge provide. He enjoyed working on the town's 100th Anniversary Celebration and helping establish the Live At 5 concert events, which have been very popular.

"I have worked with a lot of government agencies in my job, and I have never seen a community in which parish government and the municipalities work so well together. It's a real benefit to everyone," he said. As his parting message, Acosta urged residents to voice their opinions and get involved.



Council Member Tate Acosta



'Flushable' wipes, grease causing sewer back-ups

Residents are urged not to put "flushable" wipes in toilets or grease down drains because they are causing major sewer system blockages.

Wipes – even those that are listed as "flushable" on the packaging – clog up sewer mains and grind things to a halt at the treatment facility.

Because the wipes do not disintegrate in water the same way that toilet paper does, it has required additional manpower and the use of machinery to clear the blockages.

"Toilet wipes are not biodegradable and continue to be problematic in the sewer system," said Mayor David Toups. "Grease dumped down drains also causes blockages. These blockages add substantial operational costs and could end up causing back-ups for residents. Please dispose of those things properly in the trash."

Technology upgrades coming for on-line filing of occupational permits

Technology upgrades will make it much easier for businesses to file for their annual occupational license permits in 2021, when the Town of Brusly begins accepting on-line filing through the town's website: www.bruslyla.com.

Presently businesses can download the application form from the town website, but must either mail it in or deliver it to Town Hall. "This can cause issues for businesses that need their license quickly for various reasons," said Town Clerk Blaine Rabalais. "By moving the entire process on-line they can complete the application, have it approved electronically and print out their certificate all within a matter of minutes. It is a much more efficient system."

The new capability will be available in January. All businesses in the town limits are required to get new occupational licenses every year, and are given four months - from January through April - to get it done or pay additional fees for the license.

Hurricane Delta has minimal impact

The Town of Brusly fared well through Hurricane Delta. While the region sustained significant power outages, the outages in Brusly were limited to only certain areas of the town and all areas of the town had power restored by Sunday. Only two wastewater system lift stations lost power, and back-up generators kept the lift stations running.

Public Works crews spent significant time picking up small trees, limbs and leaves from streets and ditches, but the town experienced no significant impact from the storm. "I would like to thank the West Baton Rouge Parish team of officials that helped us get prepared, along with Blaine Rabalais and Mayor Rhodes," said Public Works Director Shane Sarradet. "Their communication before, during and after the event helped us get to problem areas quickly."



Get all the latest Town of Brusly news and updates!
Like us on facebook!
[Facebook.com/BruslyTownHall](https://www.facebook.com/BruslyTownHall)



UPDATE: Variety of projects underway across the city

Westside Village sewer project complete

Mayor Richard Lee is pleased to announce the completion of the Westside Village sewer project that upgraded the Avenue D lift station and enhanced the sewer system in Westside Village Subdivision.

Road rehab preparations underway

Preparations are underway to begin Phase IX of the City of Port Allen Road Rehabilitation Program that includes complete re-construction of Key West, Key Largo, Key Biscayne, Sands and Dunes streets in the West Palm Subdivision and complete overlay work on Avenue D from 14TH Street to Harry Brown Avenue.

Park restroom construction continues

The construction of restroom facilities at Cohn Park is underway, but the city is still waiting on needed approval from the Atchafalaya Basin Levee District to begin construction of a restroom at Centennial Park.

Additionally, new playground equipment will be added at Cohn Park, and exercise equipment will be added at Centennial Park. The city is spending approximately \$75,000 each on the restroom buildings, and \$175,000 on the playground and exercise equipment to improve city parks.

The exercise and playground equipment has been ordered and is expected to be installed before the end of the year. A canopy will also be installed above the exercise equipment for shade.

Future development of Westview Crossing subdivision

The city is also actively working with the developer of Westview Crossing, a 200-acre residential development on Court Street, to provide the city services

needed for the development. Developer Nolan McKay, LLC has begun clearing the property for the first phase of the subdivision, and will begin work on the infrastructure soon by installing drainage, water and natural gas lines.

Mayor Richard Lee said the city will have some work to do to get city services to the property line of the new development, and is currently coordinating that work. "This will be a great addition to our city," he said.

Trick-or-treat in Port Allen

The City of Port Allen will follow the parish's schedule for Halloween trick-or-treat, with the hours set from 5:30 pm until 7:30 pm on Saturday, October 31. Those participating are urged to wear face masks and provide for social distancing. City police will be providing additional patrols for the event.



Port Allen's beautiful riverfront.

WBR tourism re-focuses on 'staycation' advertising

The good news for the West Baton Rouge Convention & Visitors Bureau is that tourist numbers are picking up at the tourism and conference center off Interstate 10 in Port Allen, and hotels in the parish are doing well.

"It looks like the snowbirds (people who migrate from northern parts of the country to the south for winter) are starting to come in, and that's a good sign," said Kathy Gautreau, Executive Director. "The hotels are doing well because of the hurricanes and construction projects in the parish."

In addition, bookings at the conference center are picking up again. "We've have a number of meetings with small groups here in October, and people are booking the banquet room for receptions and events next year," she said.

The COVID-19 pandemic had forced the cancellation of numerous events and slowed tourism. Gautreau said they used the time to renovate the banquet and meeting rooms.

In the banquet room, a new dance floor was installed, along with new carpet and a new bar area. In the meeting rooms, the carpet was replaced.

END OF YEAR EVENTS CANCELLED: The Parade of Veterans and the Westside Christmas Festival, both big events for the WBR Convention & Visitors Bureau, have been cancelled for this year due to concerns about crowds and COVID. "We will be putting Christmas lights out for the holiday season so that people can drive by and enjoy them this year, and we plan to be back with these events next year," Gautreau said.

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES: Meanwhile, tourism advertising is being focused on the "drive market," regions that can get to West Baton Rouge within a day drive. "We are looking into some advertising deals being offered by the state, and we are continuing to meet with our Gumbo regional tourism group," Gautreau said. "I am also going to initiate a partnership with other parishes tourism departments on the Westbank to try to come up with ways we can promote tourism together. West Baton Rouge is a great hub for day trips all around this region."



Shown are photos of the renovated banquet room, with new dance floor and carpeting, and new bar area.



Local small businesses take the spotlight on Small Bus. Saturday

The WBR Small Business Council, an affiliate of the West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce, is again celebrating the parish's small businesses by asking residents to SHOP SMALL and SHOP LOCAL!

The Council will hold a pop-up shops for at various locations throughout the parish on Saturday, November 28, in which local small businesses, entrepreneurs, and merchants can sell and promote their products and services.

Last year's event was a huge success for the participating businesses, and businesses wanting to get involved should contact the Chamber at 225.383.3140 or visit www.facebook.com/WBRchamber for further information. Participation is free to Chamber members, but membership is not required to participate.

First observed in the United States in 2010, Small Business Saturday is a counterpart to Black Friday and Cyber Monday, which feature big box retail and e-commerce stores. By contrast, Small Business Saturday encourages holiday shoppers to patronize local, small brick and mortar businesses. Created by American Express, the holiday was promoted via a nationwide radio

and television advertising campaign, along with social media, advertising, and public relations.



There are 30.2 billion small businesses in the United States, with 3.7 million microbusinesses.

Small businesses provide work for 55% of the American workforce.

Job openings at firms with less than 500 employees were responsible for 40% of new jobs from 1992 through 2012.

In 2017, 42% of small businesses had a payroll of less than \$100,000, with most having 1-5 employees.

At 27%, the majority of American small businesses are located in the Southern region of the country.



Revaluation 2020: Recapping the Results

West Baton Rouge Parish will see its largest ever year to year increase in assessed property values in 2020, **\$83.5 million**, due in part to the quadrennial revaluation of all real estate in the parish and a monster increase in reported business personal property values, Assessor Barney "Frog" Altazan noted in his annual end of year property assessment report.

The total assessed value of real estate increased from \$201.2 million in 2019 to \$227.6 million in 2020. As noted earlier, there was a monster increase in the value of reported business personal property (inventory, business furniture and fixtures, machinery and equipment) from \$270.8 million in 2019 to \$320.8 million in 2020. And, the value of public service properties increased from \$44.3 million in 2019 to \$51.5 million in 2020.

Altazan said 81.5% of all property taxes paid in West Baton Rouge Parish are paid by business and industry. Additionally, the parish has approximately \$2 billion in industrial property exemptions that will be phased onto the assessment rolls by 2029. "These are exemptions the Louisiana Economic Development Office granted for new manufacturing businesses and existing manufacturing business expansions," Altazan said.

In the July 2020 issue of the Vision West newsletter there was mention of possible value reductions being offered in 2020 due to the uncertainties brought on by the Covid-19

pandemic. Assessor Altazan is happy to announce "in 2020 the Assessor's Office will provide a one-time 10% value reduction to all residential, commercial and industrial real estate properties. Additionally, our office will provide a one-time 5% value reduction to all business personal property accounts." Altazan further explained there is no application process to receive the value reductions, the Assessor's Office will automatically calculate the value reductions for all properties previously noted. The value reductions will remove approximately \$39 million in property value from the 2020 assessment roll.

Property owners can also expect to see the parish wide property tax rate for 2020 decrease by approximately 4.5 percent. The rate reduction is a result of the West Baton Rouge Parish Council rolling back both the Community Center and Drainage millage rates by 1.0 mill each, the Atchafalaya Levee District rolling back its millage rate by .03 mills and the Assessor's Office foregoing its entire 2.47 millage rate for 2020.

Taxing jurisdictions receiving property tax revenues include the Atchafalaya Levee District, WBR Parish Council (includes Community Centers, Council on Aging, Drainage, E911 Office-

Central Communications, Health Unit, Library, Museum and Recreation), WBR Parish School Board, WBR Parish Sheriff's Office and the City of Port Allen.

As always, the Assessor's Office website is available 24/7 for access to valuable parcel information including ownership data, assessed values and legal descriptions, as well as aerial photography and digital maps of West Baton Rouge Parish. You can visit the site at www.wbrassessor.org.

If you would like to review the assessment for your property, go to the Assessor's Office website: www.wbrassessor.org

2020 Property Tax Breakdown

Taxing District:	Millage	Taxes:
Assessor's Office	----	\$ 0
Atchafalaya Levee Dist.	4.01	\$ 2,045,664.00
WBR Parish Council	30.07	\$15,399,968.00
WBR School Board	58.14	\$29,775,662.00
WBR Sheriff's Office	16.10	\$ 8,245,416.00
Total taxes		\$55,466,710.00

NOTE: WBR Parish includes Community Centers and Recreation, Council on Aging, Drainage, E911 Office-Central Communications, Health Unit, Library and Museum.

PORT OF GREATER BATON ROUGE

CONTAINERS READY TO GEAOUX!



The successful public/private partnership between the Port of Greater Baton Rouge and SEACOR AMH has produced steady increases in the number of containers handled at the Port's barge terminal.

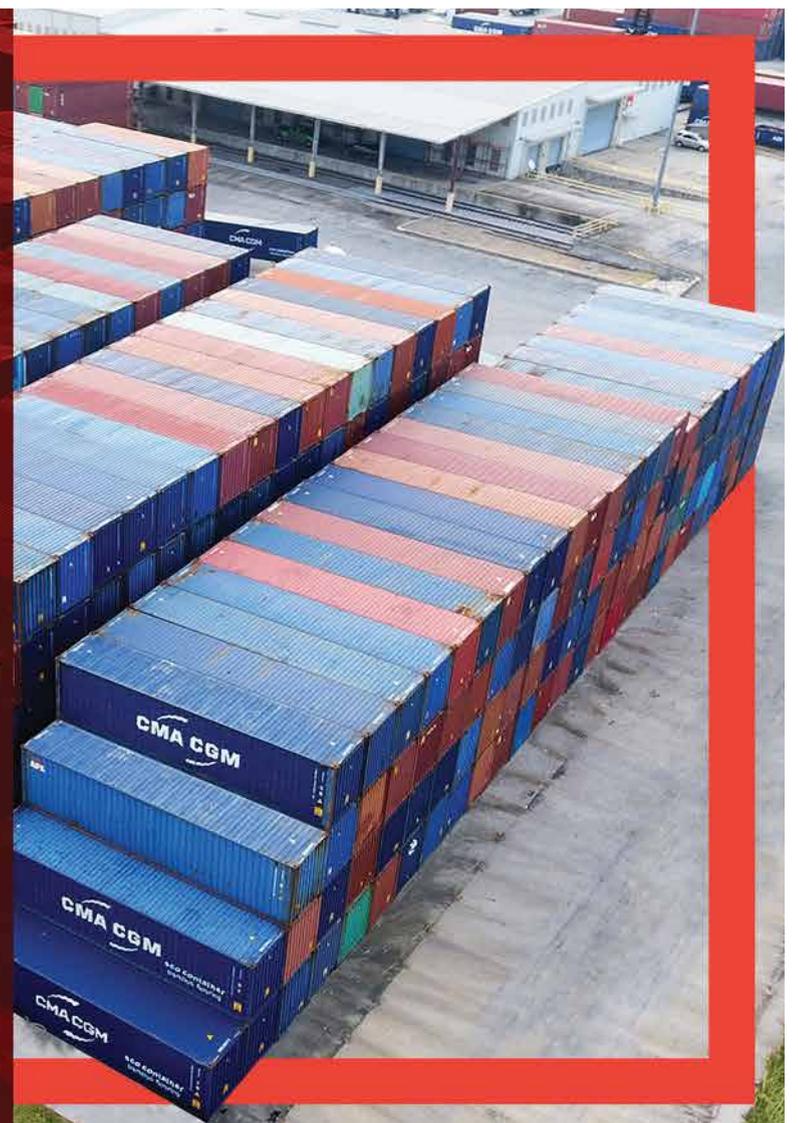
As a result, a project to create nearly 4 acres of additional paved container storage capacity has been successfully completed. The yard is now capable of handling approximately 2,000 containers including containers measuring 40 feet, versus 20 feet.

Port Executive Director Jay Hardman said that the response from local industry has been very positive. "We have been able to build in more efficiency in our COB service, which translates to a smoother, more fluid operation, lowers costs, and keeps the service competitive," says Hardman. "As the service continues to grow, it's catching the attention of more and more potential customers."

For more information, contact Greg Johnson at 225-342-1660.



2425 Ernest Wilson Drive
P.O. Box 380
Port Allen, LA 70767-0380
www.portgbr.com



WBR slowly allowing virtual students back to school settings



The start of the 2020-21 school year was unprecedented because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the West Baton Rouge School System was forced to ramp up its Virtual Academy, as 1,064 students (25% of total students) enrolled for on-line school work.

The school system significantly expanded Virtual Academy program very quickly, while also preparing schools, teachers and staffs for a very different in-school experience with COVID precautions in place.

"We have had a great start to the 2020-21 school year considering the circumstances," said Superintendent Wes Watts. "Our kids have done a great job of following the protocols in place for everyone's safety, and we have had only a very few cases. We are tracking everyone's health very closely, and trying to get more students back on campuses."

In fact, the school system just took 321 elementary students back into schools. The school system recently gave the parents of virtual elementary students the option to return to schools in mid-October, and the parents of 321 students opted for returning their kids back to schools. Of the 1,064 students enrolled on-line,

Shown at left is one of the thermal temperature scanners at schools and school system facilities across the parish. The scanners are located at the entrances to all schools; and all students, faculty and staff are required to go through the scanners as they enter school facilities daily.

half were elementary students.

"We are presently doing a survey with the parents of middle-school students to see how many want to send their kids back to schools," said Warren LeJeune, Director of the WBR Virtual Academy. "It gets a lot more complicated to get middle and high school students back into schools because, unlike elementary school students, they have varying schedules and classes. There are a lot more logistics involved, so while we would like to get the middle-schoolers back into classrooms in November, that may not be possible. It will depend on the interest and the complexity. However, any middle and high school student who wants to return to their campus will be allowed to do so in January."

LeJeune said some of the biggest challenges in ramping up the Virtual Academy so quickly included scheduling, finding teachers who wanted to teach on-line, and getting the technology for students. "We purchased some type of internet-capable computer device for all students," he said. "Then we had the issues of limited internet access in some homes, limited internet knowledge, and the rural areas having slow internet service. But, our teachers have adapted, and our parents with students in the Virtual Academy have been great and appreciate the effort being put forth by our teachers and staff."

The WBR school system has had the Virtual Academy for years because of home-bound students. LeJeune said it will continue after the COVID crisis passes, but on a smaller scale. "Most older students want to be in a school setting with their friends," he said.

\$90 million school improvement program complete soon

All of the school construction and renovation projects in the initial modernization plan will be closed out by the middle of November, with the exception of the old wrestling building located at the new Brusly Middle School (formerly the old BHS). The construction on that building will be complete by the end of November and closed out in December.

In addition, because the School Board held down change orders and managed construction dollars wisely, funds are available to add two needed projects to the plan.

They include a new pupil appraisal/counselor building, which will be located behind Port Allen High School; and a new roof on Port Allen High School.

"Fortunately, we were able to save the contingency funds we had set aside for unforeseen problems in the construction projects," said Superintendent Wes Watts. "This allows us to build the new pupil appraisal building, which is badly needed." It will be a metal building with sufficient office space and technology for that department.

Those projects will close out the school board's \$90 million school improvement project that was started in January of 2017. The project included construction of 2 new schools - Brusly High and Caneview School - along with significant improvements to all other schools in the parish.

West Baton Rouge voters approved an 8-15 mill property tax in 2016 to fund the massive project with an ambitious time schedule. It was completed on time and within budget.



New Brusly High opens to rave reviews

"Wow!" "Awesome" and "Unbelievable" have become common descriptors of students, parents and visitors as they tour the new Brusly High School. "It has a small college campus feel to it with the courtyard, landscaping and benches; and the classrooms and facilities are outfitted with the latest technology and equipment," said Principal Walt Lemoine. "It just takes people's breath away." He's given plenty of tours, including a recent tour to members of the WBR Garden Club! "Everyone wants to see it, and they can't believe it when they do," he said. "The students love the campus and are getting to classrooms easily. I have impressed upon them how they need to take pride in and respect their new campus." Shown at top is the new Brusly High School, and at bottom, the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new school.