**000Washington Park Town Crier**

Fall 2023

 There are number of items noted in this Washington Park Fall Town Crier:

**1) Town Budget, ARP, NCRCCP**

As required by the North Carolina Fiscal Management and Control Act that directs municipalities on how to administer their budgets, the Town Board has adopted the Town Budget for FY 2023-2024. The budget was similar to recent budgets which project expected revenues and expenditures in major budget classifications. The tax rate remains the same for the **tenth** year in a row at 29 cents per 100 dollars of assessed valuation.

There is an unusual revenue item in the adopted budget that will be important to the Town’s well-being. The Town received notice of a $136,000 grant through the American Rescue Plan, ARP. This Federal Covid-related program awards money to localities throughout the nation. Of course, the award comes with some procedural requirements with which the Town Board will comply. Part of the ARP procedure was to identify community needs. Basically, valuable input was gathered from a survey well done by Town residents, input from the Washington Park Planning Board’s ARP public meeting, and individual comments.

The Town will move forward to develop a budget for projects in the amount of $136,000 and work within the spending guidelines of the US Treasury.

Kudos to the ARP survey committee, the almost 100 community participating residents, the WP Planning Board, and the Mid East Commission facilitator (Pat Harris).

The Town also received a non-cash award: the North Carolina Resilient Coastal Communities Program (NCRCCP) technical assistance award. This award is designed to assist local governments in a community-driven participatory framework that will lead to the definition of near future projects. The program is a little different from most grant programs, in that there is no up-front cash award to local governments. Instead, the NC State Legislature and the Department of Environmental Quality will provide funding for technical assistance consulting staff to help local governments to identify and develop ways to overcome barriers or threats to livability in the NC coastal zone.

The NCRCCP consulting staff will partner and work with a to-be-appointed Washington Park NCRCCP Committee to develop a draft list of “shovel-ready” projects which the Board can consider. There will be Washington Park (WP) public input meetings scheduled throughout the NCRCCP process.

**2) Washington Park Volunteer opportunity**

Volunteers are needed to serve on the WP Townscape Committee. The Townscape Committee is being reestablished after having been inactive for a number of years. Residents with skills or experience in botany, biology, horticulture, urban geography, and geo-engineering are encouraged to volunteer. Goals of this Committee would be drafting a short-term, mid-term, and long-term Landscape Plan for the Park.

Townscape Committee areas of concern are town-owned areas including street rights-of-ways, medians, waterfront areas, the tennis/playground area, and the River Road Washington Park entrances.

**3) 2024 Fire rating – benefit to residents and property owners**

Washington Park contracts with the City of Washington for Fire and EMS services. This contract is the Town’s single largest expenditure in a typical year. Like all NC towns, counties, and fire districts, Washington Park receives a rating from the State of NC. The rating is based on a number of factors such as the adequacy and reliability of water supply, staffing, training, fire-fighting equipment, and distance in mileage/time from station to the fire. The rating is awarded using a scale from 1 to 10. One (1) is the sought-after highest rating; ten (10) is the lowest. The NC Insurance Commissioner and the State Fire Marshall recently announced that the official rating for the Washington Fire District, which includes Washington Park, continues to be a very good three (3.) This rating continues to favorably affect the cost of homeowner’s insurance and may save homeowners money on their Homeowners Insurance beginning July 1, 2023. Remind your insurance agent about WP’s current “class 3” rating.

**4) Reminder – Construction of any kind**

Construction of any kind (including all additions, outbuildings, fences, driveways, generators, and HVACs) needs to have a Letter of Zoning Compliance from the Town Clerk prior to getting a building permit from the City of Washington. A letter outlining the kind of building proposed and a scale drawing of the proposed structure within the lot lines for the appropriate setback allowances is required.

**5) Tennis-Pickle Ball Court keys**

The new fiscal year’s court gate keys continue to be available to Park residents. The court gate keys are available from the Town Clerk at the Municipal Building at the same price as last year, $25. A one-time pickle ball equipment box key costs $5. Please pay by check only. Checks should be made out to “The Town of Washington Park.” And, just a reminder…please turn off the lights and lock the gate as you leave the courts.

**6) Trees in the Town’s rights-of-way and other Town-owned property**

Of course, trees in the above areas are the property of the Town of Washington Park and are protected and maintained by the Town. If you see trees that appear to need maintenance (dead, dying, diseased, or dangerous), please contact the Town Clerk.

**7) Hurricane season**

The Town will prepare for weather events as it does each year. When bad storms appear imminent, the Town’s vehicles and big equipment will be fueled up and moved to high ground. The Town’s books, computers, and office files will be elevated. Lastly, the men will be alert to clear the known drainage problems of accumulated debris to permit storm-water to drain as fast as possible.

It is also important for residents to be storm-ready. A supply of bottled water with a few days of food is a logical beginning. Generators should be checked for fuel and perhaps drained and refueled. The ethanol-augmented fuel in general use these days does not store as well as non-ethanol fuel. The use of a fuel stabilizer additive is a good idea if ethanol-mixed gasoline is kept for longer than a month. Alternatively, non-ethanol gas is available at some stations and is often labeled as “recreational” gas. The use of non-ethanol gas with a stabilizer may be the best choice. It is always good to check with your generator manual or with your dealer.

As storms approach, stay in touch with your neighbors. Lend a helping hand if needed. In stressful times we all need a buddy!

**8) Reminder: Yard Debris Removal**

As always, please help the Town work crew by segregating leaves from bulkier yard debris. The vacuum unit can’t digest wires, tools, rocks, and bricks. Branches should be cut to 4 feet to fit in the garbage truck.

Commercial yard services contractors should carry off their loads; however, if a resident piles up less than a pickup truck load of grass and yard debris, the Town work crew will carry it off.

**Hard to believe this hot summer is almost over. Fall is on the way.**

**The Town Board wishes you a safe, beautiful and colorful fall season!**