



City of Westminster

NEWS AND NOTES

April 2020



City Services and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Our nation, the State of Maryland, and the City of Westminster continue to face unprecedented challenges due to the ever evolving coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Larry Hogan has issued several Executive Orders, implementing increasingly severe restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Maryland. Additionally, Mayor Dominick issued a proclamation declaring a public health emergency in the City as of 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 14, 2020.

Westminster government remains fully operational. The manner in which City services are provided has been modified in accordance with the Governor's Executive Orders and current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov).

Meetings of the Mayor and Common Council, as well as those of City boards/commissions, are being held virtually for the foreseeable future. The meetings will be live-streamed through the City's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/WestminsterMD. Check the City website and the applicable meeting agenda for further information. Those wishing to submit testimony for public hearings or to offer comments under the Citizen Comments portion of the Mayor and Common Council meeting agenda can send an email to SVisocsky@westgov.com. Please check the City website (www.westminstermd.gov) for the most current information on City meetings, Westminster government's operational status, and event cancellations.

City Supports Library Exploration Commons Project

In the near future, the Carroll County Public Library will begin construction on the Exploration Commons at 50 East Main Street. The Library is renovating the 14,000 square-foot lower level of the Westminster Branch into an interactive community space that will offer a tech-focused Makerspace, a professional teaching kitchen, and multiple collaborative workspaces.

The Westminster Branch expansion triggered the need for additional parking to meet the requirements of the City's Zoning Ordinance, which the Library was unable to provide onsite. As part of the City's effort to support the Exploration Commons project, the Mayor and Common Council agreed to assist the Library in meeting its parking requirements via a license agreement for 77 spaces in the City-owned Longwell Parking Garage. The Mayor and Common Council approved execution of that agreement on March 23, 2020.

Westminster Police Department News

On January 13, 2020, the Mayor and Common Council approved a Memorandum of Agreement between the Westminster Police Department, the Carroll County Sheriff's Office, and the Carroll County State's Attorney's Office related to the Carroll County Drug Task Force. The restructuring of the Drug Task Force is part of Westminster Police Chief Tom Ledwell's ongoing efforts to focus on safety and quality of life issues, such as deterring drug dealers from operating in Westminster. Drug-related activity is often the root cause of many street crimes, including thefts from autos in the City.

The Westminster Police Department is also participating in an 18-month pilot project with the Carroll County Health Department (CCHD) to implement Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD). The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, along with the Maryland Department of Health, the Behavioral Health Administration, and the Office of the Public Defender, are working with local law enforcement and health agencies to support three existing and six new LEAD and detention-based diversion programs for nine sites in Maryland.

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LEAD is a tool that empowers police to refer eligible individuals to public health services. This model has shown an improvement in public safety outcomes and reducing costs, while also supporting law enforcement partners and community members. Only select individuals under specific criteria would be eligible for diversion as a problem-solving tool. The Mayor and Common Council authorized the associated Memorandum of Understanding on February 10, 2020.

In March 2020, Chief Ledwell implemented a new schedule for the patrol division of the Westminster Police Department. The new six squad, 12-hour patrol staff schedule will better align staffing with the Department's workload and community service needs. Two to three additional police officers will be on the street during busy periods.

Everyone Counts: Please Respond to 2020 Census Mailing

In the last few weeks, you likely received a mailing from the United States Census Bureau. The City of Westminster is asking all community members to do their part to meet the goal of counting everyone once – and only once – in the right place.



CensusMaryland

Why does your participation in the 2020 Census matter? Compiled every 10 years, Census data is used by the government to:

- Define representative boundaries for congressional districts, state legislative districts and voting precincts, and for enforcing voting rights and civil rights legislation.
- Determine how billions of dollars in federal funding are distributed. It is estimated that each person not counted by the Census costs the state about \$18,250 over a 10-year period, for a total of \$26.6 billion statewide. This impacts critical funding for programs, including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), emergency preparedness, school construction, and transportation projects.

So, please take a few minutes to complete the Census questionnaire you received. Your personal information is legally protected and confidential, and you may respond online, by phone, or by mail.

City Strategic Plan – Water and Sewer Capacity

A major focus area of the Mayor and Common Council's adopted Strategic Plan for 2018-2021 is ensuring water and sewer capacity for future generations. Over the last few years, the Mayor and Common Council have hosted a series of meeting to share information with the Westminster community about the City's ongoing efforts to address the existing constraints to ensure the continued growth and prosperity of Westminster.

A good way to get up to speed on the City's efforts is to watch a brief (less than 30 minutes) video that is available on the YouTube channel of the Community Media Center of Carroll County. You can find that here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/carrollmediacenter> or view the video directly at <https://www.carrollmediacenter.org/episode/westminster-special-meeting-mayor-and-common-council-12-11-2019>.

45 West Main Project

Renovation of the City-owned property located at 45 West Main Street (the former site of BB&T Bank), which got underway in January 2020, is continuing. To date, Warner Construction (the general contractor) has focused primarily on demolition activities and electrical and plumbing work.

Following completion of construction, the City will relocate its administrative offices to the 45 West Main location. City staff is currently working out of leased space at 56 West Main Street, and is expected to relocate in the first quarter of 2021.