

City Calendar

<http://bit.ly/mgacal>

Thursday, 7/8
Planning & Zoning Commission
5:15pm @ City Hall

Thursday, 7/15
Third Thursday Art Crawl
Downtown Morganton

Monday, 8/2
City Council Meeting
6pm @ City Hall

Thursday, 8/12
Planning & Zoning Commission
5:15pm @ City Hall

Monday, 9/6
Labor Day Holiday
City Hall Closed



Enjoy the market!

Farmers Markets are continuing through the end of October! Enjoy Wednesday Mini-Markets from 11a-2p at 111 N. Green St., or Saturday Markets from 8a-12p at 300 Beach St.

Martha's Park Ribbon Cutting

You won't find any peace and quiet in Martha's Park these days — not that you'd want to, given that there's so much to enjoy. Instead, you'll find plenty of children laughing, playing, shouting and running around as they enjoy the park's brand new amenities.

The City of Morganton and Morganton Service League held a ribbon cutting Thursday, June 17, to mark the completion of renovations and installation of new equipment at Martha's Park. Park renovations began near the end of 2020, and were completed in late spring of this year.

"Martha's Park is one of our most well-loved and popular local parks, and we are so proud to have completed these renovations so that children in this region can continue to enjoy it," said Parks and Recreation Director Rob Winkler.

New features at the 1.4 acre park include a new main playground structure, Americans with Disabilities Act compliant playground equipment, new rubber mulch and pour-and-play surfacing, and a greater variety of playground equipment for all ages.

The park renovations were made

possible by funding from the City of Morganton and the Morganton Service League. Martha's Park originally opened in 1972 as The Children's Park, and was funded by the City of Morganton. The park was renovated in the early 2000s with funds raised by the Morganton Service League, and was then renamed in

honor and memory of Martha Phifer.

A new feature of the park pays homage to one of the more unique features of the original park. Martha Phifer enjoyed playing in a small house that sat on the old park's property. While that house is now gone, a smaller modern playhouse sits in the park as part of the new renovations.

Most of the new equipment is geared toward smaller children, Winkler said, as a way to give younger children in Morganton something to enjoy. In addition to the playhouse and new main playground structure, there is a smaller climbing structure, a xylophone, a see-saw, and more.

Rhonda Ensley, Morganton Service League board member and Chair of the Morganton Service League's Martha's Park Committee, said it was a blessing to see how the park has evolved over the years into what it is now.

"It is such an honor for the Morganton Service League to be part of creating such an asset to our downtown," Ensley said. "This park is so well-loved by our community, and I am so glad we are able to honor this park's legacy and Martha Phifer's name."



City staff, Morganton Service League members, and citizens gathered Thursday, June 17, for the Martha's Park ribbon cutting that marked the completion of the park's renovations.

Practice good greenway etiquette

Welcome to summer! During this past year more and more people have taken advantage of our beautiful Catawba River Greenway.

On greenway trails such as ours, bicycles yield to pedestrians. Yielding means slowing down, establishing communication, be prepared to stop if necessary and pass safely. ALL users should stay to the right, be prepared for and expect that someone else (walker, jogger, skate boarder, roller balder, or cyclist) may come towards them or up from behind.

- Walkers, joggers, skaters, and bicycle riders should travel in a predictable and consistent manner so as not to cause accidents.

- Greenway users should use only one earphone if listening to music in order to hear traffic coming up from behind.

- Keep all pets on a leash, and out of the way of other trail users.

- Keep bicycle speeds lower on the greenway. Adjust speed for congestion and surface conditions.

- Be courteous and notify other users when passing. A friendly greeting, stating "passing on your left" works well.

If we all follow these simple multi-use trail rules our experiences on the Greenway will be that much more pleasant. Be on the lookout for each other, share the trail, and we hope to see you outside!

Council passes budget for fiscal year 2021-2022

The Morganton City Council approved the City's 2021-2022 Fiscal Year budget after a public hearing Monday, June 21, 2021. The budget totals \$79,281,813.

Despite a year of hardship brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, City of Morganton residents will enjoy almost no increased costs for any utilities or services, except for a \$5 monthly surcharge for CoMPAS cable television service that will take effect in January 2022 to cover the ever-rising cost of programming.

The unanimously adopted budget saw almost all fees for city services stay the same, including rates for water, sewer, solid waste and CoMPAS internet and phone rates. Property taxes will hold at 57 cents per \$100 of property value, with the downtown special tax rate staying at 14 cents per \$100 value.

Electric customers will enjoy rate reductions ranging from 2 to 7 percent. Average households are expected to save an average of \$27 per year from the cut, and commercial savings will be between \$500 and \$5,000. Industrial customers will receive savings of 2 percent on average.

"One year ago it was impossible to imagine that COVID-19 would still be

impacting every aspect of our daily lives," said City Manager Sally Sandy. "In preparing for the 2021-2022 budget, we have continued the approach of balancing fiscal responsibility with the duty to keep Morganton moving forward. This approach served us well last year and allowed us to reinvest, repair facilities and begin exciting new projects that represent our vision."

Fiscal year 2021-2022 will include planning for the receipt of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding. It is believed that Morganton will receive \$4.8 million total in ARPA funding. This funding will be accounted for in a separate special revenue fund, which the City Council approved creating during its June 21 meeting. Preliminary discussion concerning use of these funds include street resurfacing, sidewalk repairs, expanded internet capabilities, and sewer infrastructure. The City plans on using these funds to invest in assets that will serve the citizens for years to come, as opposed to covering operating expenses. These funds will be budgeted for specific projects once receipt and amounts are confirmed.

In fiscal year 2020-2021, the City staff negotiated an unprecedented number of payment plans for past due utility payments and

ad valorem taxes. CDBG entitlement COVID-19 funding of \$131,000 was distributed to assist with past due utilities, rental assistance, and aid to non-profits. In spite of these and other economic challenges the end of year financial results of 2021 were positive. Conservative budgeting and extremely conservative spending contributed to this year-end result.

Moving into fiscal year 2021-2022, the City plans to continue to budget conservatively and spend wisely to enhance life for all of our residents, and continue to invest in the experience of Morganton.

"This budget conservatively advances our community investment. It supports efforts to achieve our masterplans. It allows City employees to deliver services to the citizens of Morganton at reasonable costs. It keeps in our focus the goal of making Morganton the place we choose to live, work, and play," Sandy said. "To our community — hang in there. Look around and see the progress we are making in being the community of choice. Take the time to see and enjoy all that Morganton has to offer — and as you make your decisions about life after the pandemic — choose Morganton."

MORGANTON CITY COUNCIL

Ronnie Thompson • Mayor

Butch McSwain • District 1

Chris Jernigan • District 2

Chris Hawkins • District 3

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