

THE MILTONIAN

SPECIAL EDITION



www.cityofmiltonwv.com

May—June 2020

From the Mayor

Wow! March started out so nice. It definitely came in like a lamb! Since the weather was agreeable, the City had plans to get a jumpstart on cleaning, clearing, planting, mowing, etc. But you know what they say about the best laid plans! COVID-19 had other ideas for us!

The City of Milton, like other municipalities across the country, has tried to do its part to “flatten the curve” so often discussed on the news. Our top priority is to keep our residents and employees safe and healthy while maintaining essential services for our community.

Trying to keep virus exposure to a minimum, access to City Hall is limited to the drive-thru, drop box, telephone and emails. Our employees in the office have been working a rotating skeleton crew to keep the City running as smoothly as possible during this pandemic. Likewise, our field employees have worked similar shifts to ensure that necessary services remain intact. Of course, emergency situations occur such as the recent leak on Adams Avenue and the valve problems behind Piggly Wiggly and on Route 60 which require us to call in more help. In fact, several employees worked throughout the night to get these issues repaired. In addition, our water plant operators are critical to the production of safe, clean water for our customers. Given the importance of hygiene to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is more important than ever to keep the water pumping.



As first responders, the Milton Police Department has remained fully operational. Balancing public safety and public health has become much more difficult. Their job duties often require them to actively disregard the suggested social distancing expected of most of us just to carry out their duties. As I'm sure many of you have experienced, keeping a supply of sanitizing gel, spray and wipes available to disinfect hands and work surfaces has been a challenge. Due to the shortage of PPE, our police officers were often without masks to wear. One of our employees, Susie Edmonds and her sister, Jan Edmonds, made washable masks for our Police Officers. Thank you, Susie and Jan! We really appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity. Additionally, we've had several donations of hand sanitizer to the Police Department. THANK YOU! Our residents are the BEST!!

I'd also like to extend a huge THANK YOU! to all City of Milton, Milton Utilities and Milton Police Department employees. We are so fortunate to have such a great crew. Each one is an important and essential spoke in the City's wheel, and I appreciate every single one of you!

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VOTE!

The Primary Election has been rescheduled for June 9, 2020. Voting has never been easier!

Every registered voter should have received a postcard with instructions on how to apply for an absentee ballot for the upcoming election. You can also apply for an absentee ballot at GoVoteWV.com.

In addition, Early Voting will be held May 27—June 6, 2020 at Milton City Hall, Monday—Friday, 8:30 am—4:30 pm and Saturdays, May 30 and June 6, 9:00 am—5:00 pm.

On June 9, 2020, voters should go to their regular polling place. We encourage you to exercise your right—your responsibility—to vote.

REMEMBER

MAY 25, 2020



& HONOR

From the Mayor (Continued)

In addition, I want to offer my gratitude to the citizens of Milton for their patience as we navigate these uncharted waters. There have been a lot of necessary changes made to comply with the safety measures set forth by the CDC and health department, and we appreciate your understanding as we try to balance convenient services versus necessities.

As you go through town, you will notice that many local businesses are making the best of a bad situation. Essential businesses such as grocery stores and pharmacies, and restaurants offering delivery, drive-thru and pick-up services appear to be thriving while the “stay at home” order persists. Thank you to those employees who must continue to work during this pandemic so that we all can continue to have access to necessities such as food, medication and fuel. We appreciate you!

While I am glad for the success of those essential establishments, it is saddening to see the darkened windows and “CLOSED” signs on so many store-front doors. Our residents and businesses have done very well following the guidelines set forth by the CDC and local health departments to comply with social distancing recommendations. All of you have flattened that curve! Once this storm passes -- and it will -- I implore each of you to visit these local stores. Buy local. Help these small businesses get back on their feet.



Store and business closings and canceled events have meant layoffs, furloughs and unpaid leaves of absence for many, leaving numerous families devastated. My heart aches for those businesses and families. Here at the City we have been fortunate to be able to work a skeleton crew each day while continuing to pay our employees. I'm not sure how long we will be able to continue doing this, but I hate the thought of our employees losing their pay as well as their insurance. Please take a moment to be grateful for what you have. If you have extra, consider helping a loved one, friend or neighbor.



It seems almost normal now to see people wearing face masks and gloves. But we need to continue to practice “social distancing.” I want to remind everyone that the Stay at Home Order should not be considered a vacation. Now is not the time to pay a visit to long-lost friends and family or anyone who does not live with you, nor for taking leisurely family strolls through Walmart. COVID-19 is a deadly virus and needs to be taken seriously by all of us.

Recent reports show that the number of COVID-19 related deaths in West Virginia is significantly lower than was projected. Any death is a tragedy, but the numbers show us that what we are doing is working! Because you washed and sanitized your hands frequently, fewer people died. Because you practiced social distancing, fewer people died. Because you stayed home, fewer people died. We've come so far; we don't want to undo our past efforts to slow this virus by becoming complacent. Don't be the reason an outbreak occurs in your home, on your street or in your town.

Be safe and sanitary. Act responsibly. Cover coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or tissue (then throw the tissue away), wash and/or sanitize your hands regularly, avoid touching your face, stay home, sanitize doorknobs, light switches, keyboards, remotes, etc. If we all do these simple things, life can go back to some semblance of normal sooner rather than later.



One major issue we have noticed with the greater number of people staying home and the increased usage of sanitizing wipes is that our sewer pipes and pumps are getting clogged. This has been a problem locally and across the nation for quite some time, but recently the problems have increased significantly. Many are following the recommendations by public health officials to clean and sterilize frequently touched surfaces. The problem is that they are then tossing the disinfectant wipes, paper towels and other paper products into the toilet, causing a surge in backed-up sewer lines, which creates additional public health risks in the midst of this pandemic. **Please don't flush any wipes, regardless of what the product packaging indicates.** Place trash in a bin, not the toilet!

Masses consisting of cleansing wipes, tampon applicators and other items were removed recently from one of our sewer pump stations. This blockage caused one of the sewer pumps to burn up, requiring its replacement, costing **over \$12,000.00** for a new pump, and that did not include charges for removal and installation. Overall, nearly **\$20,000.00** was spent on a new pump because of improper disposal. If the sewer becomes obstructed on your side of the sewer line, this can cause sewer back-ups into your homes resulting in expensive and disgusting repairs and clean-up. **This is a simple problem to solve.** Please, please, please, only flush toilet paper and what naturally comes out of your body.

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From the Mayor (Continued)



Do not flush or place in any drain: band-aids, cat litter, chemicals, cigarettes, cleaners, coffee grounds, condoms, cooking fats, cotton balls, dental floss, diapers, dirt, ear swabs, egg shells, face masks, facial tissue, feminine hygiene products, fertilizer, gloves, glue, goldfish, grease, gum, hair, herbicides, lint, medication, mop strands, nail clippings, napkins, needles, oil, paint, paper towels, pesticides, pet waste, pills, pins, plastic bags, products claiming to be flushable, nursing pads, rags, razors, sanitary pads, scrub pads, spoiled food, syringes, tampons or tampon applicators, tissues, toys, twist ties, vitamins, water/sewer bills, wipes, wrappers, etc. I'm sure we missed a few things, but you get the idea. And yes, this list was compiled from experience!

Wastewater (sewage) management is an expensive undertaking. Milton Utilities sends its wastewater to Salt Rock Sewer for processing, at a current cost of **\$33,000.00 per month** pursuant to an agreement with the Regional Plant Operating Committee (RPOC). It has been projected that this monthly fee will soon likely be closer to **\$40,000.00 per month**. Furthermore, there are often separate expenses for repairs to equipment shared with RPOC.

In addition to those costs are the necessary infrastructure expenses such as sewer line repairs and replacement, the maintenance of force mains, pump stations and lift stations, and the utility costs associated with keeping these stations up and running. We have one employee whose main duty is to try to keep these stations functioning properly.

When we have to repeatedly replace pumps due to items being improperly disposed of into the sewer system, it gets expensive. And frustrating. We budget for maintenance and repairs in such a way as to keep rates as low as possible. We absolutely do not want to raise rates again to cover the costs of improperly flushed products. Your compliance with this simple request will create fewer headaches and health concerns and ensure your bills do not increase for this preventable issue.

And speaking of bills, we have not imposed penalties on past due water and sewer bills, nor did we perform shut-offs for non-payment this month. Keep in mind, that you must still pay those bills. This hiatus will not last forever. If you've received your stimulus check, make sure to use it wisely. Don't allow your bills to get so far behind that you can't catch up.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the United States, phone scammers have taken the opportunity to prey on consumers. The FCC offers these tips to help you protect yourself from scams:



- Don't respond to calls or texts from unknown/suspicious numbers.
- Don't share personal or financial information via email, text messages, or over the phone.
- Be cautious if you are pressured to share any information or make a payment immediately.
- Scammers often spoof phone numbers to trick you into answering or responding. Government agencies will never call you to ask for personal information or money.
- Do not click any links in a text message. If a friend sends you a text with a suspicious link that seems out of character, call them to make sure they weren't hacked.
- Research a charity (call or look at its actual website) before donating.

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DON'T FORGET
THESE SPECIAL
DAYS:

Mother's Day, May 10



Armed Forces Day, May 16



Father's Day, June 21, 2020



West Virginia Day, June 27



From the Mayor (Continued)

There have been many changes and/or cancellations of events due to social distancing regulations. Keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for updates. Some of the changes include:

- ⇒ Spring Clean-up has been rescheduled for the week of May 26.
- ⇒ City Council, Utilities Board meetings and Municipal Court proceedings for April were postponed. We hope to resume these events on the normally scheduled dates in May.
- ⇒ The primary election has been rescheduled for June 9, 2020. See page 1 for more information.

People often turn to scripture during times of stress, like the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent quarantine. I know I have. 2 Timothy 1:7 reads: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love and sound mind." There are many other uplifting verses. Seek for yourself. Nothing beats prayer, and nothing is more comforting than God's Word.

Be proactive. Be understanding of how your actions, or inactions, affect others. Be smart. And look for those rays of sunshine. They are out there. I love the City of Milton. Being your mayor is an honor and a privilege that I don't take lightly. Thank you!



WELCOME TO THE CITY OF MILTON WHERE LIVING IS A PLEASURE!

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