

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Creative Writing
Workshop - Feb. 2 @
WBR Museum (page 2)**

**Addis Firemens Mardi
Gras Parade - Feb. 11 @
1 pm - Addis**

**Krewe of Good Friends
Parade - Feb. 19 @ 1pm -
Port Allen**

**Snake ID program-
March 4 @ 10 am -
Library (page 2)**

**Children's sculpture
workshop - March 18 @
Museum**

**Easter EGGstravaganza
& talented art reception
- April 2 @ 2 pm - WBR
Museum (page 2)**

**Kite Fest- April 28 & 29
@ Soccer Complex
(page 5)**

See more events at Museum
& Library on Page 2

Parish assists Port City program in developing new bread-making business

A new business venture is beginning in West Baton Rouge, but this one is unique in that it was created by Port City Disability Services to provide long-term work opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the parish.

The ambitious business venture to provide fresh-baked bread rolls for Bergeron's restaurants has obtained the backing of West Baton Rouge Parish government, and began its early stages of operation in January.

Susanne Landry Romig, Port City Director, and Parish Council Member "Moonie" Bergeron went to Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot with the idea that this business could serve two purposes: provide sustainable, long-term work for the Port City clients with special needs, and also provide a sustainable revenue source for the Port City program.

The parish's help was needed in providing a facility for the bakery. "The Parish Council and I thought it was a great idea, and we allocated about \$70,000 for an addition of a room to the American Legion Hall in Port Allen for the bakery," Berthelot said. "The addition was constructed by our parish crew, which saved a lot of money. And because it is connected to the American Legion Hall by a door, they can use the restrooms in that building."

Port City purchased all of the equipment needed, which included commercial baking ovens, a huge refrigerator/freezer, tables and much more.

Romig said they will purchase pre-mixed dough. Workers will measure it for consistency, roll it into balls, proof and bake it. Once it cools they will bag, label and package it into boxes. "This is something they can do



In photo above, Port City clients get instruction from "Moonie" Bergeron (on left in cap) on how to roll the dough to make bread rolls. In the photo at left, Susanne Landry Romig, Port City Director (in pink shirt), instructs Port City clients on how to weigh and place the dough on trays.

with their hands in a climate-controlled environment," said Bergeron, who is a board member of Port City Enterprises. "Previously Port City clients were mowing grass in the heat of summer and this wasn't ideal. The program was really struggling. This business model is better for the clients and has the potential to expand and provide breads for other businesses too."

Because he has two children with autism, and also employs two workers with disabilities at his business, Bergeron has a good understanding of those with special needs. "When these kids age out of school, they have nothing to do. This program provides fulfilling and useful activities for them," he explained.

Romig and Bergeron expect the operation to initially be run by about 10 of Port City's present 28 clients, with proper supervision. "We need volunteers to oversee the clients in our bakery operation," she said. "We have a small staff, and need help to keep everything going. Anyone interested can call us at 225-343-1142."

Continued on page 2

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 1st 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

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BATON ROUGE, LA
PERMIT NO. 88



Port City clients and Director Suzette Landry Romig (in pink shirt) prepare to get one of the first bread trays out of their new commercial ovens, as Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot (second from right) looks on.



At left, a Port City client shows off one of their first trays of rolled bread dough.



Above, Port City clients gather with their first bag of rolls.

Parish assisting Port City program in developing break-making business

Continued from page 1

Port City provides in-home support, day habilitation, employment, and creative opportunities for teens and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Port City receives revenue from Medicaid, but because that funding is not sufficient, additional fund-raising activities are needed. Currently Port City serves 28 clients, but not all will have the abilities to work in the bakery.

The Parish Council provides facilities and utilities for Port City, including an operations building, an adjacent small old home used as a gift shop to sell items hand-crafted by Port City participants, and now the bakery facility.

The initial goal of the bakery is 500 rolls per day to supply Bergeron's, but Bergeron said his business also needs po-boy and other bread supplies if the Port City operation can provide them. For Romig, the business venture is both exciting and intimidating. "We have had to learn federal and state regulations for a wholesale operation, and go through that process. Moonie has been extremely helpful because he knows the food business," she said.

Bergeron praised Romig for being willing to try new and creative ventures to make Port City sustainable; and for her strong work ethic. "She has a real passion for helping these clients, and she is growing this program."

The Parish Council also included a face-lift of the American Legion building with the addition. It included re-painting the interior of the building, new lighting, and a new roof, which was needed.

The next fund-raiser for Port City is the 11th Annual Angling Against Autism bass fishing tournament, set for Saturday, March 5, at Doiron's Landing in Morgan City. For more information on it call Port City at 225-343-1142.

WEST BATON ROUGE LIBRARY

Upcoming events

Holiday Closures:

Presidents' Day – Monday, February 20

Mardi Gras – Tuesday, February 21

Easter Holiday – Friday and Saturday, April 7 and 8

Weekly Storytimes - All ages children's storytime continues on Tuesday mornings at 10 am. Call for more information, (225) 342-7920 Ext. 231 or register online.

LA Snake ID – Saturday, March 4 - 10 am - Special presentation with Kevin Hood from Louisiana Snake ID. He will bring native and exotic snakes and share his knowledge of identifying local snakes.

Homeschool Hangout - Hands-on STEM programming one Monday each month, February through May for K-12th graders. See website for more information.

Teen Advisory Board Meeting – Saturday, March 18 - 11 am - TAB is open to teens in grades 6-12. Discussion of volunteer opportunities and plan programs for teens by teens. Snacks are always served. Register online. Call for more information.

Author Visit – Saturday, April 29 - 11 am - Local author, Sarah Guillory, will talk about her latest middle school novel.



LOUISIANA SNAKE ID
Saturday, March 4th
at 10 am



Join us for the West Baton Rouge Parish EGG-STRAVAGANZA

SUNDAY, APRIL 2ND 2023
2:00-3:30 PM

at the West Baton Rouge Museum

Egg Hunt Age Groups & Times

- 2:45 pm - Baby to 2 years old
- 2:55 pm - 3-5 years old
- 3:05 pm - 6-8 years old
- 3:15 pm - 9-12 years old



Don't forget to bring your basket.

LIBRARY
WEST BATON ROUGE
Egg Hunt
Easter Bunny
Petting Zoo
Fun Activities
Music



This event is free and sponsored by the WBR Museum and WBR Library. Refreshments will be available for purchase. The talented student art show will be on display. In the event of rain activities will move to the Port Allen community center.

845 N. Jefferson Ave. Port Allen, LA 70767 | (225) 336-2422

LIBRARY
WEST BATON ROUGE

830 N. Alexander Ave.
Port Allen, LA 70767
www.wbrpl.com



is published quarterly as a cooperative endeavor of West Baton Rouge Parish government agencies. It is produced by Peacock Communications, LLC. Comments: ellie@peacockcommunications.com, or call 225-929-9661.



Hazardous materials collection grows

A whopping 342 residents used the annual Household Hazardous Materials Day event, held in October, to properly dispose of paint, tires, batteries, electronics, fire extinguishers, motor oil, antifreeze and much more. The event was coordinated by Keep West Baton Rouge Beautiful and the Dow Chemical Co., and it was the largest collection day on record! Thanks to Dow and the 68 volunteers who worked the event.

Council seat election in March

The West Baton Rouge Parish Council has called a special election for March 25 to fill the seat of Caleb Kleinpeter, who resigned from the Council after winning election as state Senator of District 17 in November. He represented Council District 4.

Qualifying for the election is set for January 25-27, and early voting for the election is March 11-18. The winner will fill the seat only through 2023. The Parish Council is up for election on October 14, and the winner will have to run again in the fall election, but in a slightly different district due to re-districting taking effect with the October elections.

Also, the election to fill the unexpired term of the late Ward 3 City Marshal Mike Zito will be held on October 14. Deputy City Marshal Amy Terrell has been appointed to serve as City Marshal until a new marshal is elected.

Did you know?

West Baton Rouge Parish has responsibility under the Clean Water Act to ensure clean waters within its jurisdiction.

Please help keep storm water runoff clean by:

- having your septic system inspected regularly,
- making sure you don't discharge anything illicit into the storm water system,
- monitoring neighbors and businesses in your area for sediment and pollutant control, and
- reporting any litter you might find in local ditches, canals and bayous.

Thank you for helping keep storm water clean now and into the future!

How to properly dispose of tires

WBR residents wanting to dispose of old tires can drop them off free of charge at Environmental Industries Recycling, 7122 Nolan David Road in Port Allen Monday thru Friday 9 am to 3 pm. Maximum 5 tires accepted. No rims allowed. Must have a valid La. driver's license and a La. license plate.

Transportation project updates

Construction of the Intracoastal Bridge replacement is proceeding. The bridge is estimated to be complete in the summer of 2023, when north bound La. 1 traffic will be moved to the new bridge while structures are demolished and structures are built.

The La. Hwy. 1/La. 415 connector project is in the 30% design phase at this time; and procurement of a CMAR contractor is underway. The construction of this project is anticipated to begin in late 2024 or early 2025. The CMAR project delivery method will allow for earlier-than-normal delivery. The parish continues to aggressively pursue federal transportation funding to help close the final funding gap for construction.

The I-10 widening project is underway. The area begins at LA Hwy. 415 in West Baton Rouge Parish and extends along the I-10 corridor to East Baton Rouge Parish up to the I-10 and I-12 split at Essen Lane. West Baton Rouge officials have repeatedly expressed concerns about the traffic implications of the construction project during 2024.

Bayou Stumpy project begins in summer

The parish is expected to have final authorization to go out for bid on the Bayou Stumpy drainage improvement project within 90 days, and the project is expected to start by late summer. The \$1 million project will clean out, widen and deepen Bayou Stumpy, which drains a large portion of the northern part of the parish. The parish has received a hazard mitigation grant for 75 percent of the project cost, which was later amended by GOHSEP to cover construction at 100 percent.



Keeping utilities going during freeze

Parish water and natural gas crews worked through the holidays to make sure residents did not lose water or gas service in the extreme cold weather event from December 23 - 26. Crews worked 24-hours a day to monitor and keep water wells, mains, gas metering stations and sewer plants operating in 20 degree temperatures, and in some areas lower. One water well went off-line and several isolated water mains ruptured, but were quickly repaired during the 80-hour weather event. In the photo at left workers repair a ruptured water line at night in freezing temperatures. No boil advisories were needed. Thanks to these crews for their dedication and difficult work during holidays!

WBR water system gets A grade

The West Baton Rouge water system was one of only 14 water systems in the state to receive an A grade from the La. Department of Health's Safe Drinking Water Program. The letter grade is reflective of water system quality and performance, and is based on seven standards evaluating infrastructure, accountability and overall health risk of drinking water to consumers. The initial grades were issued in early January.



LIFEGUARDS WANTED!

**Fun Summer Job!
Perfect for responsible high school & college students!
WBR Recreation Department will provide training.
Call 225-336-2423**

Christmas Crusade helps more families than ever!

The West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office Christmas Crusade program had a record-breaking year in 2022, assisting 72 families with a total of 202 children, compared to 55 families and 152 children in 2021. In addition, it also reached over 46 special needs adults in the community.

While families in need rose, donations in 2022 were also record-breaking! Sheriff Mike Cazes extends a special thank you to Louisiana Valve Source of Port Allen, Louisiana Towing and Recovery, Olin Corporation, The Zippers, and more; for not only their donations, but also time donated.

WBR deputies even raised nearly \$1,000 on their "Grow a Beard, Save a Child's Christmas" campaign.

This program was designed to not only bond law enforcement with the community, but to bring joy to the local area through Christmas cheer. Detective Christian Conaway explains, "Nothing ends this year better than to know we have reached more children than ever before. Nothing is better than the light in a child's eyes as they see presents underneath their tree on Christmas morning."

Sheriff Mike Cazes, Deputy Hannah Swarner (Christmas Crusade Program leader), and the West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office would like to thank everyone for their generosity!



Deputies recognized for efforts

The officers shown above were recognized and thanked by the West Baton Rouge Parish School Board at its meeting in January for their quick action and investigation into a phone threat at Brusly Upper Elementary School. They responded very quickly and were relentless in making sure the school was safe. They are, from left: Detective Landry, Detective Doucet, Assistant Principal Jared Robinson, Brusly Officer Fontenot, Deputy Stokes, and Detective Austin.

Litter program pick-ups increased



You may have noticed the litter program is more active in recent months. The Sheriff's Office has increased its hours. Inmates have collected the following: Commercial Drive - 166 bags; La. Hwy. 415 - 200 bags; Hwy. 190 to old bridge - 196 bags; Court St. to La. 415 - 235 bags; 190 under bridge - 190 bags; La. Hwy. 1 from old bridge to new bridge and under new bridge - 225 bags. That's a lot of litter!

TOWN OF ADDIS

First Street drainage project to provide big improvement in heavy rain events

The First Street drainage project is approximately 90% complete. The project called for the removal of an existing run of approximately 220 feet of 24-inch arch pipe and 280 feet of 36-inch round pipe.

Both have been replaced with engineered design parallel twin runs of drainage pipe, which incorporates more surface water collection boxes and catch basins. Also, the single 30-inch culvert under First Street has been replaced with two 36"x 48" box culverts. This will dramatically increase the flow and release of water, and eliminate the backup and standing water that typically occurred between First Street and Sixth Street during very heavy rain events.

The construction portion of this project is anticipated to be complete by January 30. Final surface grading and First Street asphalt will be done immediately after, pending dry working conditions. The total cost for this project is \$667,000.00.



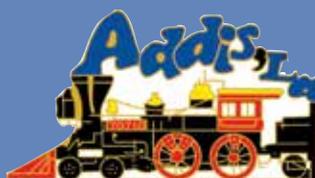
Shown are the double culverts, which replaced a smaller single culvert.



Shown are the two box culverts, which replaced a single smaller culvert.



ADDIS INFO: Keep up with town activities through the Addis facebook page at: facebook.com/TownofAddis; or on the Addis website: addisla.org.



TOWN MEETINGS:

Town Council - 1st Wednesday of month, Town Hall, 6 pm
Planning & Zoning - 3rd Tuesday of month, Town Hall, 6 pm

The lifeblood of a small town - neighbors caring for each other

“Being raised in a tight-knit community often means feeling like your whole town is your family.”

Juliet Izon

One of the best attributes of living in a small community is how neighbors care for each other, especially in times of hardship and heartbreak. That was never more evident than in the myriad of ways the Brusly community rallied to help the Gill and Dunn families after the vehicle accident on Jan. 31 that killed Caroline Gill and Maggie Dunn, and severely injured Liam Dunn.

In the wake of the accident, people came together; blood drives drew droves of givers; businesses offered part of their profits to help with the families’ expenses; raffles were, and still are, being held to help the families; people developed prayer chains; meals were made and delivered; hundreds attended the candlelight vigil and funerals; and support still continues.

“I am so thankful to live in a community of such caring people,” said Mayor Scot Rhodes about the outpouring of support to the Gill and Dunn families. “I am sure it is a lifeline for those families, but it is much more. This has been a tragedy, but it has also brought our community together, and helped us all realize and remember that the most important thing we will ever do is care for each other.”

Following is the ever growing list of businesses and restaurants that have joined the effort to help: Rio Cantina, Burger Me, Louisiana Bayou Bistro, Zuwar Greek & Lebanese, Brusly Sonic, Court Street Cafe, Clubhouse Bistro, Chop

Shop, JW Food Mart, Don’s Sportsman, Walk-On’s, Back Brusly Grocery, Evolve Skin Care, Sunny Belle Designs, Lit Pizza Brusly, Westside Deals Bin Store, Southern Angler Fishing Charters, Over Coal Cookoff in Port Allen, Back Brusly Grocery Oaks, Scentsy – Hiram Tabor, Route 190 Nutrition, Brusly/ Port Allen basketball game, Bella Grace Paper and Benoit’s Meat Market. Others are also joining in the efforts to help these families.

The Town of Brusly extends its thanks to everyone for making our community such a special place to live.



The line to give blood outside of Brusly High School.



Part of the crowd at the candlelight vigil.

WBR CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Holiday events draw big crowds

While the holiday season is busy for many people, that didn’t stop participation in two new events for the West Baton Rouge Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The Jingle Jeep Parade, which was staged at the Conference Center and promoted by the Visitors Bureau, drew a slew of jeeps decked out for the holidays as they paraded through Port Allen.

And the Polar Express Movie Night at the Conference Center, featuring Santa and other children’s activities, plus the Polar Express movie on a big outdoor screen, was a hit with many families!

“We definitely will continue with some type of children’s’ event for Christmas with an outdoor movie,” said Convention & Visitors Bureau Director Kathy Gautreau. “Everyone really enjoyed it.”

The Bureau staff is now planning for Kite Fest (see flyer at right), continuing promotion of West Baton Rouge through the Southeast Louisiana GUMBO group, and handling a big increase in bookings of the Conference Center for meetings, conferences and weddings.

“We are back up to our pre-Covid bookings for the Conference Center, which is great,” said Gautreau. “We surpassed our target revenues in bookings for 2022 and expect that trend to continue in 2023.”

MARDI GRAS PARADES:

Don’t forget about the family-friendly West Baton Rouge Mardi Gras activities coming up: The Addis Firemen’s Parade is set for Saturday, Feb. 11 at 1 pm; and the Krewe of Good Friends Parade rolls on Sunday, February 19, at 1 pm. in Port Allen.

For event information:
800-654-9701
www.westbatonrouge.net

SATURDAY 11 AM TILL
FIREWORKS AT DARK
SUNDAY 11 AM - 6PM

West Baton Rouge Soccer Complex
3383 Rosedale Road
in Port Allen



Keep up with coming events in WBR:
[Facebook.com/WBRVCB](https://www.facebook.com/WBRVCB)

DA holds true to promise of taking violent criminals off streets

The District Attorney's Office is taking violent criminals off the streets, bringing them to trial and getting convictions with a no-nonsense, tough on crime approach. As a result, DA Tony Clayton's office has not lost a jury trial in the last two years.

"This administration has shown that those who choose to use guns have forfeited their right to walk around with the rest of our citizens. We have taken drug dealers, murderers and child molesters off the streets," Clayton said. "In the coming year, we have several murder trials set, and we plan on convicting them too, sending an even stronger message of our zero tolerance approach to crime."

"Our communities on the West Bank will only continue to thrive when we all work together to combat crime," he said. "I'm grateful to those citizens who have supported this collective vision in building brighter futures for families and children. An immense amount of gratitude is extended to our law enforcement professionals, and especially the victims who are courageous enough to face those that perpetuate crime. Together, we will continue to enhance the positive attributes that our communities have to offer."

The process of getting a criminal case to trial is complicated and time-consuming, requiring work by a variety of DA's Office staff and other agencies. Clayton promotes collaboration and teamwork among his staff, including group meetings in which staff are encouraged to give different perspectives on cases. "We need our staff to present their ideas and opinions because we need to present the strongest case possible in court," Clayton said.

Once the DA's Office gets the file of an arrest, it is screened to determine what the suspect was arrested for and what charges the DA's staff think can be proven in court. Investigators and support

staff begin the detailed process of gathering information: witness statements, rap sheet, evidence, victim's information, etc. If cell phone records, DNA information or an expert analysis is needed, it may take several months to get back to the DA's Office.

During this time, they are collaborating with the Assistant District Attorney appointed to the case, and meetings are held with DA Clayton to build the case, close loose ends, and prepare for motions and a trial. As long time DA's Office Manager Andrea Landry said, "One person can't make a trial go off without a hitch. It takes a lot of people working months to get it done. Tony is an integral part of making everything happen. He keeps pushing, but he also is very supportive of his team."



DA Tony Clayton (seated at center) and staff members of the DA's Office look at pictures of evidence gathered in preparation for a trial.

WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM

Museum plans variety of events, activities for all ages

FREE Monthly Programs

1st Fridays, 1-3 pm – Le Café Français

1st Sundays, 2-5 pm – Behind the Barn Doors (features demonstrations of historic trades and agricultural practices inside the museum's big red barn)

2nd Sundays, 3-5 pm – Old Time Jam (due to the Easter holiday, join us one week early on April 2 for Old Time Jam).

3rd Fridays, 6-8 pm – Historical Happy Hour

3rd Sundays, 3-5 pm – Le Jam with the Cajun French Music Association

Last Tuesdays, 6-7 pm – Yoga

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Creative Workshop with Felicia Noelle - February 2 @ 6 pm – Adult participants are invited to explore acrylic painting techniques with this artist featured in the Ron's Retro exhibit. Reservation needed. FREE

Lunchtime Lecture: Remembering Ronald Kennedy: The Life and Legacy of an Artist, Art Educator and Activist - February 8 @ Noon - Eileen Kennedy shares stories of the impact of her late husband on art, education, and civil rights/ equity/social justice in the arts. FREE

Painting with the Pastor - February 12 @ 2:30 pm – Exhibit artist and retired pastor Darlene A. Moore explores images of church, couples, and community. Reservation needed. FREE

National History Day - February 16 - Greater Baton Rouge Regional Contest. For information, or to volunteer or serve as a judge, call (225)336-2422.

Lunchtime Lecture: Remembering the Baton Rouge Sit-Ins of 1960 - February 24 @ Noon – Joan K. Garner, daughter of civil rights activist, John B. Garner, will speak about this significant historical event. FREE

Collage Workshop - March 11 @ 10 am- WBR native and exhibit artist Randell Henry leads a class for participants of all ages. Reservation needed. FREE

Written and Spoken Word through COVID and Beyond - March 12 @ 2:30

pm – Exhibit artist, author, and retired pastor Darlene A. Moore gives a writing workshop to discover what helped us survive the challenges of recent years. Reservation needed. FREE

Children's Sculpture Workshop: Styles of Clay Working - March 18 - Children ages 8-12 can learn various ways to work with clay with retired art educator Philip Louis. Reservation needed. FREE

Talented Student Art Exhibition - March 25th – Exhibition opens through April 8.

Easter EGGstravaganza & Talented Art Reception - April 2 - - Easter Egg Hunt on the museum grounds featuring games, crafts, music, a visit from the Easter Bunny, reception for WBR Talented Student Art Show and more. FREE.

Ben Peabody's Art and Addiction exhibit - April 15 – Exhibit opens through June 4.

Lunchtime Lecture featuring Sam Irwin on his latest book, Hidden History of Louisiana's Jazz Age - April 26 @ Noon – followed by a book signing. FREE

RON'S RETRO
Honoring Ronald Kennedy
with pieces
by local Black Artists.

JANUARY 19
THROUGH
MARCH 19, 2023

WEST
BATON
ROUGE
MUSEUM

featuring
Keith Douglas
Malaika Favorite
Randell Henry
Michael Howes
Phillip D. Louis
Darlene Moore
Felicia Noelle
Clifton Webb

Special assessments & exemptions for property owners

In addition to a \$75,000 homestead exemption, Louisiana residential property owners have other special assessments and property tax exemptions for those who qualify, said West Baton Rouge Parish Assessor Chris Guerin. They are:

SPECIAL ASSESSMENT FOR BEING AGE 65 or OLDER OR DISABLED:

The Louisiana Special Assessment Level program allows for residents who are either:

- 65 years of age or older, or
- a veteran with a service connected disability rating of 50% or more by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, or
- a person permanently totally disabled as determined by a court or a state or federal agency, or
- a member of the armed forces of the U.S. or Louisiana National Guard who was KIA, MIA or a POW to have the assessed value of their residence frozen for property tax purposes. This means their homes would not be subject to re-valuation every four years and the assessed value of their homes would remain the same no matter if property values increase.

To be eligible for any of the Special Assessments property owners must:

- own and occupy a residence qualifying for the homestead exemption, and
- have a combined adjusted gross income of \$100,000 or less in 2022 or later, and present proof of income and personal identification.

EXEMPTION FOR VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES:

Effective January 1, 2023, in addition to the homestead exemption authorized above, Louisiana Constitution Article VII Section 21 provides veterans with service-connected disabilities the following additional exemptions:

- Veterans with a service-connected disability rating between 50-69% shall receive exemption from property taxes on the next \$25,000 of residential property value.
- Veterans with a service-connected disability rating between 70-99% shall receive exemption from property taxes on the next \$45,000 of residential property value.

- Veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 100% unemployability or totally disabled shall be fully exempt from property taxes.

The additional exemptions above require Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs Revised Form A25.

The surviving spouse of a deceased veteran with any of the service-connected disability ratings referenced above shall be eligible for the additional exemption if the surviving spouse occupies and remains the owner of the property, whether or not the exemption was in effect on the property prior to the death of the veteran.

EXEMPTION FOR UNMARRIED SURVIVING SPOUSES OF MILITARY, LAW ENFORCEMENT & FIRE PROTECTION OFFICERS:

Act 678, approved by state voters, became effective December 1, 2016. Act 678 establishes an exemption from property tax for the total assessed value of the primary residence for the unmarried surviving spouse of a person who died while on active duty as a member of the 21 armed forces of the U.S. or the Louisiana National Guard, or while performing their duties as a state police officer, local law enforcement officer or fire protection officer.

EXEMPTION FOR UNMARRIED SURVIVING SPOUSE OF FIRST RESPONDERS:

Act 427, approved by state voters, became effective January 1, 2018. Act 427 establishes an exemption from property tax for the total assessed value of the primary residence of an unmarried surviving spouse of a person who died while performing their duties as an emergency medical responder, technician, paramedic or volunteer fire fighter.

Assessor Guerin urges any property owners who qualify to come in and complete their applications for these programs at the Assessor's Office in the West Baton Rouge Parish Courthouse in Port Allen.

Need more info? Call the Assessor's Office at 225.244.6777.

PORT OF GREATER BATON ROUGE



■ Storage capacity has nearly doubled to accommodate up to 2,000 containers.

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.

■ Meet the Big Red Beast.

A 20% efficiency gain in container operations at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge is just one positive outcome of the Port's new, deep-reach container stacker known as *The Big Red Beast*. With a telescopic boom for stacking four containers high, shorter loading and unloading times have helped meet the increasing demand for container shipping services between Baton Rouge and New Orleans for area customers. The addition of the custom-made stacker is another component of the Port's recent expansion of its successful container operations.



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

■ 2425 Ernest Wilson Drive ■ P.O. Box 380 ■ Port Allen, LA 70767-0380
PH: (225) 342.1660 ■ FAX: (225) 342.1666 ■ www.portgbr.com

School Board cuts list of candidates to five for superintendent position

The West Baton Rouge Parish School Board narrowed its search for a Superintendent down to five candidates, who will be interviewed by the School Board between January 30 and 31 and February 1. The Board has called a special meeting for Tuesday, February 7, to determine the next steps after the interviews.

Applications were due December 31, and eight applications were received. They include: Troy Bell, Director of Federal Programs and Academics for the Franklin Parish School District; Charlotte Blanchard, West Baton Rouge Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance and Transportation Liaison; Patrick Jenkins, St. Landry School Superintendent; Paul Nelson, Tensas Parish School Superintendent; Cleo Perry, Director of School Leadership and Development for East Baton Rouge Parish Schools; Tammy Seneca, West Baton Rouge Supervisor of Information Systems & Education Technology; Chandler Smith, Assistant Superintendent for the Central Community School System; and James Stroder, Supervisor of Instruction and SIS for the Baker school system.

The five chosen for interviews include Bell, Blanchard, Jenkins, Seneca, and Smith. The superintendent directs the daily operation of the school system, which serves 4,300 students with 10 schools, 680 employees, and an operating budget of \$65 million.

The parish's previous superintendent, Wes Watts, retired in 2022. The School Board appointed David Corona, who had served as superintendent prior to Watts, as the Interim Superintendent until a new superintendent is selected.



Congratulations to our Students of Year!

Congratulations to the West Baton Rouge Parish Students of the Year! Mallory Gill, a senior at Brusly High School, was named High School Student of the Year. Braiden Brown, a fifth grader at Brusly Upper Elementary School, was named Elementary School Student of the Year; and Tytiana Belton, an eighth grader at Caneview School, was named Middle School Student of the Year.



New School Board takes office

The new West Baton Rouge Parish School Board took office in January, with four new members. The new board members include Burke Fiscus, Sonceria Moore Evans, Hayley Clouatre and Matthew Daigrepoint, who were elected in the fall 2022 elections. The new board is shown above. They are, seated from left, Sonceria Moore Evans, Hayley Clouatre, Teri Bergeron, and Chareeka Grace; and standing, Burke Fiscus, Dr. Atley Walker, Ronald LeBlanc, G. Alden Chustz, Matthew Daigrepoint, and Michael Maranto.

School Board OKs construction of two new school buildings

The WBR School Board has approved the construction of two new buildings - an 8-classroom building at Brusly Middle School, and a new career and technical education building next to Port Allen High School.

The 23,546 square feet career and technical education building, which will house the WBR Career Academy, will serve all WBR schools, not just Port Allen High. The building will have the capacity to offer welding, electrical, millwright, health sciences, culinary arts, construction, cosmetology, and robotics. "This state-of-the-art building will allow us to offer the pathways necessary for our students to move into the workforce," said Julie Mayeux, Supervisor of Secondary Education/CTE.

The 9,042 square feet classroom building at Brusly Middle is necessary because the school lost a few classrooms when it was moved to its present location in the old Brusly High School, and also to accommodate the growing enrollment of Brusly Middle School.



Rendering of the new WBR Career Academy, Dean Hotard & Associates, Architect

The school board is expected to put the projects out for bid by the end of February, and the buildings are both projected to be completed in August of 2024.

The School Board has authorized Business Supervisor Jared Gibbs to work with the Louisiana Bond Commission on a \$9.5 million bond issue for the construction of the buildings. The bonds will be paid over 10 years by existing school system revenues. Taxpayers will not be asked to provide any additional funding for these buildings. This bonding arrangement is how the addition to Brusly Elementary was built years ago.