

Parish projects under Berthelot's leadership

- Secured federal/state funding for La. 415 Connector Road
- Lobbied for Intracoastal Bridge and La. Hwy. 1 improvements
- Head Start Program
- Erwinville, Lynndale, Lobdell, Lukeville sewer improvements
- Louis Mouch, Jr. Multi-purpose Facility
- Dredged Parish Canal, Diversion Canal and Bayou Stumpy
- Rizutto Connector road
- Consolidated 911 system and Central Communications
- Consolidated water districts
- Consolidated fire districts
- Mississippi Levee-top trail extension from PA to Addis and Joliet Trail
- Rosedale Road culverts & sidewalks
- Sid Richardson Connector Road
- Generators for all buildings & sewer operations
- New William & Lee Community Center
- Assumed and renovated VFW and Lions Buildings
- Extensive upgrades to all community centers and parks
- New 20 inch water line from PA to Addis and new water wells

Berthelot leaves legacy of projects over 20 years

Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot turned over the reins to the parish on January 8, marking the first change in parish administration in 20 years. Over his tenure, Berthelot compiled an exhaustive list of accomplishments and projects, many of which required funding and/or the collaboration of federal and state agencies and officials.

"President Berthelot's many years of being a business owner, public servant, and his altruistic approach with the citizens of West Baton Rouge will leave a legacy in West Baton Rouge Parish," said new Parish President Jason Manola. "West Baton Rouge Parish benefited from the relationships he had at the state and federal level when it came to seeking funding or accomplishing projects that involved federal or state partners. His fiscal accountability has positioned West Baton Rouge Parish for a bright future. I was fortunate to have served 14 years in his administration and I look forward to continuing to move our parish forward."

In his day-to-day operation of the parish, Berthelot worked with members of Congress, state officials, the WBR legislative delegation, and other local officials on solutions to the challenging issues of traffic, infrastructure improvements, and quality-of-life improvements for West Baton Rouge residents. He also served on the Executive Board of the La. Police Jury Association, as Chairman of the Capital Region Planning Commission, the WBR Transportation Authority, and more.

Berthelot was elected as Parish President in the fall of 2003, and took office in January of 2004, serving five terms in office. Prior to becoming Parish President, he had served two terms on the Addis Town Council, and two terms on the WBR Parish Council, so he has been in public service for a total of 36 years! He also owned and operated several businesses. Congratulations on your retirement PeeWee, and thank you for your outstanding service to West Baton Rouge.



Retired Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot



Berthelot signs a local coalition proclamation raising awareness of the problem of drug addiction among young people in WBR.



Berthelot with his wife, Susie, and mother, Margaret Berthelot.



Shaking hands with Gov. John Bel Edwards during signing of a La. Hwy. 415 Connector funding bill.



Meeting with then Vice President Mike Pence.

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 2nd Tuesday 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

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Looking back on 2023, and ahead to a bright future for WBR

By Anna Johnson,

WBR Chamber of Commerce Executive Director

We're optimistic about the future, both for our Parish, as well as for our businesses. WBR has handed the reins to a new Parish President and leadership team, which will build on our successes; continue the Parish's dedication to exceptional client service; drive growth; and further strengthen our commitments to diversity, innovation, small business, and industry.



Chamber Director
Anna Johnson

2023 was a year that demanded much of our community. The Chamber focused on creating a distinctive experience for our members, consistent with the Chamber strategy we launched in 2022. We developed and executed innovative solutions on high-stakes deals, new energy transition models, elections, and even infrastructure. Here's some highlights:

LEADERSHIP SHIFTS: Leadership shake-ups were seen across West Baton Rouge with a new school Superintendent, Dr. Chandler Smith, named. What a great fit he will be for moving our students and teachers forward.

West Baton Rouge also elected a new Parish President, Jason Manola – a familiar, yet welcoming face. Look to see Manola focusing on keeping WBR financially healthy, and working across parish lines with Iberville's new Parish President, Chris Daigle. And after 20 years in office, Sheriff Mike Cazes announced his retirement and will be succeeded by Jeff Bergeron in the summer of 2024.

CARBON CAPTURE: We spent a great deal of time at the Capital last year, addressing and assisting with what Carbon Capture means for our state, particularly the Capital Region. West Baton Rouge is welcoming these projects with open arms. Of those projects, \$10 billion in Carbon Capture Utilization and Sequestration (CCUS) projects have been pledged to West Baton Rouge in the coming years, with nearly 1,000 new jobs promised. Our location, acceptance and

work in the industrial space placed us at the center of global trends related to energy transition, environmental, finance and globalization of CCUS. The Chamber continues to contribute on these issues. In December, the EPA granted Class VI primacy to the State of Louisiana - a huge milestone and win for our state.

CAREER ACADEMY: The new WBR Career Academy is being built next to Port Allen High School. West Baton Rouge School System was awarded the Reimagine Grant in 2022 to develop a CTE Academy, offering programs in welding, electrical, engineering, CNA, CMA, and biomedical fields.

What a milestone this is for West Baton Rouge. Too many high school students lack access to challenging, engaging courses that prepare them for college and a career. Evidence from rigorous studies suggest that career academies can boost students' high school graduation rates and employment outcomes.

A moment to brag on our schools as well - West Baton Rouge Parish Schools marked a 2.3-point increase in school performance scores, according to the Louisiana Department of Education. West Baton Rouge's score increased from 79.4 to 81.7 - a "B" letter grade for the school system.

POVERTY DECLINE: According to the Baton Rouge Area Chamber, West Baton Rouge leads the state in the largest decline in poverty year-over-year. What contributed to this? Believe it or not, construction jobs. It's hard to overlook the expansions that West Baton Rouge announced in 2023 alone - Shell Catalyst, Placid Refining and Cortec, LLC, to name a few. Plus, ExxonMobil announced the creation of its new three-part Innovation Suite, in which a new resin-production facility will be housed in Port Allen. These are all healthy signs of a growing parish with open arms and a willingness to work with business.

ON THE HORIZON: We continue to support our business community as they explore evolving markets such as renewable energy, permanent capital, and expansions, growing small business, and supporting industry. We couldn't be more confident about the state of our parish and our ability to serve the community. I look forward to growing with you all in 2024.

WEST BATON ROUGE LIBRARY

Fun programs set in coming months

The West Baton Rouge Library has a new free eBook and audio-book resource for its patrons, Cloud Library. This resource adds thousands of new titles to our digital collection for patrons. Contact the library for more information.

YOUTH PROGRAMS:

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.

Home school Hangout - Hands-on STEAM programming on the third Wednesday of each month, February through April for K-12th graders. Space is limited. To register and learn more, visit our website.

Teen Cooking Class with Cookbook Author - Saturday, February 3rd at 11 a.m. Teens in 6-12th grade and their parents/guardians are invited to a cooking demonstration with Louisiana cookbook author Brittany Khamille. She will teach us to cook Crawfish Stuffed Pistolettes and samples will be provided. Space is limited. Sign up on our website.

Author Visit - Saturday, March 2nd at 11 a.m. Local author Ila Belona is a home school mother who enjoys singing, dancing, cooking, and traveling. Her books are available on Amazon. She will have a fun craft activity afterward. Recommended for ages 4-8 years old.

Teen Advisory Board Meeting - Saturday, March 9th at 11 a.m. TAB is open to teens in grades 6-12. We will discuss volunteer opportunities and plan programs for teens by teens. Snacks are always served. Register online. Call for more information.

Upcoming Holiday Closures:

Lundi Gras & Mardi Gras - Monday, February 12th and Tuesday, February 13th
President's Day - Monday, February 19th
Easter Holiday - Friday, March 29th

Easter Eggstravaganza! - Save the Date - Sunday, March 24th, 2-3:30 p.m.

ADULT PROGRAMMING:

Cookie Decorating Class - Thursday, February 6th from 6 p.m.-7:30 p.m. Decorating sugar cookies with the Kookie Deaux Bakery. The class will last an hour and a half. All supplies are provided. Space is limited. Register online. Registration is required.

Author Visit - Thursday, February 15th at 10:30 a.m. Sarah Guillory, a local author and teacher, shares her award-winning young adult books. The Westside Women's Club will host. Registration is required.

Adult Spelling Bee - Saturday, February 24th 11 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Think you're the best speller in West Baton Rouge Parish? Come to our library and find out. Register online to be in the audience. To be a contestant call (225) 342-7920 ext. 227.

Bad Art Night - Tuesday, March 5th, 6 p.m.- 7:30 p.m. Leave your talent at the door, create something terrible with us. Ages 18 and up. All supplies are provided. Registration is required.

Hip-Hop Step Aerobics Class - Saturday, March 23rd, 10:30 a.m.- 11:30 a.m. Beginner-friendly hip-hop step aerobics class for all fitness levels. If you have your own step platform, please bring it. Space is limited. Registration is required and opens February 14th.

Beginner's Charcuterie Design Class - Saturday, April 27th, 11 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Want to learn how to make charcuterie designs? Join us and Crafted Nibbles BR. All supplies are provided. Registration is required and opens March 18th. Space is limited.



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Port Allen, LA 70767
www.wbrpl.com



New WBR Parish President, Council take office

West Baton Rouge Parish's new president, Jason Manola, and the WBR Parish Council, took office in swearing-in ceremonies on January 8. Shown are these parish officials: Back row from left: Kirk Allain, District 1; Atley Walker Jr., District 3; Daryl "Turf" Babin, District 2; Kenneth Gordon, District 5; and Gary "Shaq" Joseph, District 9. Front row from left: Michelle Zito Tullier (Council Clerk), Alan Crowe (Council Vice Chair), District 7; Carey Denstel (Council Chair), District 6; Brady Hotard, District 4; Katherine Andre, District 8; and Parish President Jason Manola.



Bayou Stumpy clean-out

The \$1.5 million Bayou Stumpy Watershed Improvement Project is well underway, with the contractor, Shallow Water Equipment, Inc. de-snagging and improving drainage in this critical canal. The project is being fully funded by a federal grant and is expected to be completed by April.

Health Unit offers free vaccinations

Residents are reminded that the West Baton Rouge Health Unit, located at 685 Louisiana St. in Port Allen, offers free flu, shingles, and tetanus vaccinations for adults. It also provides support for women, infants and children (WIC), family planning resources, nutrition services and more. Clinic hours are 8 am until 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. Call to schedule an appointment at 225-215-5201.

265 kids playing Biddy Ball

The parish Recreation Department's Biddy Ball League started January 8 with 265 kids participating. The league includes boys and girls, age 4 to 12. It will continue through the end of February, with play-offs March 4-6. Games are played at the Port Allen Community Center and Brusly Upper Elementary School gym.



Sidewalks coming for Lukeville Lane, Court St.

Plans are about 60 percent complete for the construction of sidewalks in various areas of the parish. They will be added on Lukeville Lane and on Court Street from La. Hwy. 1 to the West Baton Rouge Convention and Visitors Center.

The parish received state and federal grant funds for the project, which is expected to be constructed in 2025. These are state roads, which requires approval of the La. Department of Transportation and Development for the plans and specs; and the projects are being state funded.

Wednesday, February 28, 2024
 Wednesday, March 13, 2024
 Wednesday, April 10, 2024
 Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Senior Spirit Dance

11:30 AM - 2:00 PM

Addis Community Center
 7520 Hwy 1 South, Addis, LA 70710
 \$5.00 Admission
 Finger Food & Soft Drinks Provided
 No Alcohol Allowed

Music by:
 Classic Sounds by Jude

PARKS & RECREATION
 WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH

Keeping WBR Beautiful

Inmates from the West Baton Rouge Parish Detention Center recently picked up trash along roadways in the parish as part of the effort to keep West Baton Rouge Beautiful. Special thanks to Keep Louisiana Beautiful for providing grant funding for the necessary equipment to make this program successful and, most importantly, to help provide a safe operation.



Christmas Crusade helps 256 children

This has been a record-breaking year for the WBR Christmas Crusade program. The West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office assisted 93 families and a total of 256 children, as compared to 72 families and 202 children assisted in 2022.

While the number of families in need rose, so did the amount of donations. This year, the Sheriff's Office received more monetary donations than toys. This allowed the program to shop more specifically for each child's wants and needs. Sheriff Mike Cazes thanks Louisiana Valve Source of Port Allen, Louisiana Towing and Recovery, Olin Corporation, The Zippers, Port Allen Tire, Placide Retirement, Cutting on Edge, Benoit's Country Meat Block, State Farm, Sun Industries, Southeastern Trucking, Wal-Mart, and others for their monetary and time donations.

In addition, WBR Deputies even raised nearly \$2,000 on their "Grow a Beard, Save a Child's Christmas" campaign. The Christmas Crusade for Children of WBR has been around for more than 28 years, and was designed to bond law enforcement with the community and bring Christmas cheer to local residents.

The program is a three-week process of reviewing applications submitted, collecting donations at Wal-Mart, organizing gifts, purchasing additional gifts, and lastly packaging all gifts for distribution the week before Christmas. For the past few years the Sheriff's Office is grateful to have Olin and Valve Source lending a helping hand.

Sheriff Cazes, Intel Analyst Hannah Swarner (Christmas Crusade Program leader), and the West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office thank everyone for another great Christmas Crusade!



At left, donations are collected at Wal-Mart; and at right are some of the donated toys.

TOWN OF ADDIS

Mardi Gras Parade rolls Feb. 3

11 am
First St., Addis

The 61st Addis Firemen's Mardi Gras Parade is sponsored by the AVFD Ladies Auxiliary.

Theme: "Through the Generations," honoring the 1924 American La France Fire Truck No. 1.

No entry fee. Floats will be judged on parade theme, originality, and construction.

1st, 2nd, and 3rd place ribbons given to winners.

Info: Facebook.com/Addis Fireman's Mardi Gras Parade.



Bourgoyne appointed Public Works Director in Dec. 2023

Travis Bourgoyne was named the town's new Public Works Director in October 2023, after former Director Phillip Smith retired. Bourgoyne had previously served as Utilities Director for the City of Plaquemine for five years. In that roll, he directed the city's electrical, sewer, water and natural gas systems.

Bourgoyne will now direct the town's sewer and public works crews, including road and drainage projects. He and his wife, Stephanie, have been residents of Addis since 2014.



Travis Bourgoyne

ROAD OVERLAY PROJECT ALMOST COMPLETE

The Town's \$575,465 road overlay project on Ed LeJeune Road and Wyatt Christopher Road is expected to be completed by the end of January. Contractor R.J. Daigle & Sons began the project in November.

Some of the road repairs required a complete reconstruction from the road base, and asphalt overlays was done in other areas. In addition, patching was done on some streets throughout town.

DRAINAGE PROJECT FOR SUGAR HOLLOW

Arbour Construction was the low bidder for the drainage project in Sugar Hollow Subdivision. The Town Council approved its low bid of \$714,000 in October, and work will begin in February. The project will relieve flooding in severe rain events, and includes the addition of culverts along existing ditches to significantly increase the capacity of the drainage system; along with expanding the retention ponds to handle the additional storm water.

Rockin' on the Railroad coming soon!

Spring dates for the Rockin' on the Railroad concert series are:

April 12 Lee Serio Band

April 26 Louisiana

May 10 The Justin Cornett Band



TOWN MEETINGS:

Town Council - 2nd Tuesday of month, Town Hall, 6 pm

Planning & Zoning - 1st Tuesday of month, Town Hall, 6 pm

\$5.2 million sewer improvement project to begin this Spring

The town's \$5,211,788 million project to upgrade the sewer system is expected to break ground in March, after years of effort to obtain funding, get required state permits, and develop the plans.

"These improvements will alleviate sewer back-ups during intense rainfalls and provide a system that properly services our town for another 20 to 30 years," said Mayor Scot Rhodes. "By obtaining \$3.978 in Water Sector grant funds and using the \$880,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds the town received in COVID relief, the town will only allocate \$353,627 in funds for this project."



The sewer system improvements are needed to address issues with the aging sewer system, water infiltration, and more stringent La. Department of Environmental Quality regulations, Rhodes explained.

When the town originally went out for bid on the project, bids came in \$1.5 million higher than expected, which could have scrapped the project. "State Rep. Jeremy LaCombe and Senator Caleb Kleinpeter helped us a lot when the bids came in so high," Rhodes said. "Their help was instrumental in getting state approval for an additional \$1.2 million in funding."

Mayor Rhodes credited Shane Sarradet, Public Works Director, with the idea of applying for Water Sector funding for the project; and engineer Toby Fruge of Owen & White Engineers for assisting with the grant application. Various portions of the project have been awarded to two firms: Spinks Construction and Southern Underground. The projects include:

Adding a second force main to the sewer treatment facility:

The Live Oak Lift Station is the sewage catch all for the entire town. All sewage and rain infiltration go to this station and is pumped almost one mile west to the sewer ponds. During extreme rain events, this station can get overwhelmed.

When it reaches an extremely high level, it can cause plumbing issues along the western ends of Orleans Quarters, Allene, and Live Oak.

The lift station presently includes two above ground pumps that send raw sewage to the sewer ponds via a single 8-inch force main pipeline. By adding a second force main, each pump will have its own line, doubling the amount of sewage pumped to the sewer pond quickly.

Upgrading 2 lift stations: The South LaBauve lift station and Bourgeois Street lift station will receive much-needed upgrades. Both stations have 1 HP submersible pumps that cause maintenance problems. The S. LaBauve station is also under-powered.

The Bourgeois Street station now drains everything from the Riverside Apartments and new subdivisions since that station was installed in the early 1980s.

The old pumps will be replaced with new above ground pumps, along with all the electrical stations. These pumps will be easier to maintain, and the town will no longer have to hoist submersible pumps from the raw sewage to work on them.

Replacing the old duckweed system at the sewer treatment facility:

The entire surface of Cell 3 will get a new modular cover system that will help with heat retention, odor control, algae elimination, TSS removal, and wildlife mitigation. This will replace the LEMNA duckweed that exist now in Cell 3. Presently town crews must manually remove the duckweed three to four times a year.

With the cover, the town will no longer have to harvest duckweed, and will not have constant repair on an antiquated boat used for that purpose. In addition, two polishing reactors will be installed between the effluent of Cell 3 and the chlorine contact chamber, which effectively removes ammonia and polishes BOD, two things the town must sample weekly under state regulations.

WBR CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Beautification projects in the works

A beautification effort is being planned for the La. 415 exit off Interstate 10 in front of the WBR Convention and Visitors Bureau, said Tourism Director Kathy Gautreau.

"We want to add a welcome sign with flowers in the median, and are beginning the process of getting La. Department of Transportation and Development approval for that," she said. "It will take a while for this to get done, but we are hoping to have everything in place by the end of 2024," she said.

In addition, a new digital sign for the Convention and Visitors Center is also being installed this year. "This will be a larger sign that will be visible from the interstate, and it will also have the capacity to show more elaborate visuals," she said.

LONG TERM PROJECT: Gautreau, the Bureau's staff and the Board of Directors is also eying a renovation of the tourist information center portion of the center. "The tourist experience has changed through the years. Tourists are no longer interested in brochures - they view things digitally on their mobile phones. We are just beginning to explore ideas about how to renovate this space for the best use and what we need to provide for today's and future travelers to get them to stop and visit our tourist attractions. 2024 will be a year of visioning and planning on that," she said.

Meanwhile, planning for the first event for 2024, and one of its biggest of the year, Kite Fest, is well underway. That event will again include a student day and a fireworks display. In its 19th year, Kite Fest now draws thousands to WBR from the region and out of state. See flyer at right.

Its last event of 2023, the Jingle Jeepin' Parade and Market, held in early December, continues to grow. A record 76 Jeeps decked out in Christmas attire participated in the parade, and activities included a market at the Convention and Visitors Center. "We are continuing to perfect this event each year, and already have ideas to make it better in 2024," Gautreau said.

DA's Office takes record 32 violent crime cases to jury trial in 3 years, gets 32 convictions

District Attorney Tony Clayton took office in January of 2021, but, due to COVID, judges did not resume court proceedings until April, 2021. Since then, Clayton hit the gas on prosecuting cases, especially violent crime cases.

A record 32 criminal trials were held between April 2021 and November 2023, including murder, rape, sexual assault and pornography cases.

"The good people of Iberville, West Baton Rouge and Pointe Coupee Parishes had the faith and confidence in me to elect me as District Attorney without opposition because I promised to get these violent criminals off our streets," Clayton said. "Our excellent staff has answered the call - we have been prepared and prosecuted these cases fully."

"The other key in our success has been our residents who have made up the juries," he added. "When presented with the evidence, they have said, time after time, they will not stand for the crime, and have issued guilty verdicts over and over."

"We will continue to fight every day to keep our communities safe and to stop the influx of criminals from other communities," Clayton said. "They will know that we will prosecute them fully, we will take them to trial, and we will ask for the toughest sentences allowed by law. That's what our residents want, and that is what we will continue to deliver."



**DA's OFFICE
VIOLENT CRIMINAL
TRIAL RESULTS**
April 2021-December 2023

Number of trials held	32
Murder cases resolved	28
Life sentences (Includes a 100 year sentence)	19
Major rape/sexual assault/ pornography cases	8



**HAPPY
New Year**

District Attorney Tony Clayton

UPCOMING EVENTS

WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM
845 N. Jefferson Avenue, Port Allen, LA 70767
www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org



Dwight of Tooty
HUSTLE SERIES
JANUARY 8 - APRIL 8, 2024

SHUTTER & SOUND
THE JAZZ PHOTOGRAPHY OF BOB WILLOUGHBY
THROUGH MARCH 17, 2024



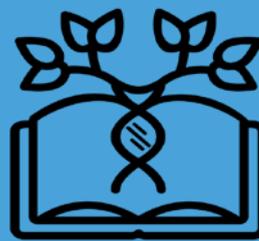
FREE OF CHARGE

**Children's
Drawing &
Painting**
with Ms. Shaun

Saturday, February 24
Saturday, March 23
Saturday, April 27
from 10:30 AM - 12PM

Limited space,
Call ahead to register
225.336.2422

EXPLORATIONS IN



GENEOLOGY

WBR Genealogical Society
presents

Honoring Black History

Saturday, February 10

10:30 AM - 12PM

with guest speaker,

Ja'el "YaYa" Gordon

Italians In Louisiana

Saturday, March 9

10:30 AM - 12PM

with guest speaker,

Andrew Capone

Jewish Louisianans

Saturday, April 13

10:30 AM - 12PM

with guest speaker,

Brian J. Costello



Ages 6-12
Blast from the Past
SUMMER HISTORY CAMP

Two one-week sessions
to choose from
• June 17-21
• June 24 - 28
Registration opens March 7
www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY CONTEST

March 9, 2024

To register, visit la.nhd.org.

Registration to participate closes

February 21

EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA

MARCH 24TH

2 - 3:30PM

HOSTED BY THE WBRM & WBRPL



Special assessments & exemptions for property owners

In addition to a \$75,000 homestead exemption, Louisiana residential property owners have several 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 2023 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 prior to the death of the veteran.

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 information? Contact the Assessor's Office at 225-344-6777.

PORT OF GREATER BATON ROUGE

LOUISIANA
PORTS
WORKING
TOGETHER

IMPORTANT

WE KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF

the maritime industry to the economic well-being of our state, particularly through the five deep-draft ports along the Mississippi River:

- Port of Greater Baton Rouge
- Port of South Louisiana
- Port of New Orleans
- St. Bernard Port, Harbor and Terminal District
- Plaquemines Port, Harbor and Terminal District

When the total tonnage of cargo shipped from these five ports is combined (500 million tons annually), it qualifies as one of the largest port complexes in the world.

To stay competitive nationally and globally, and attract federal infrastructure funding, all ports must work together. United by this cooperative spirit, the Port of Greater Baton Rouge anticipates statewide economic growth through enhanced development across all deep-draft ports.

WWW.PORTGBR.COM



New career/college courses for high school students

High school students in West Baton Rouge will have new opportunities to schedule career training or college courses for the 2024-25 school year through the new Career Academy and Early College programs.

Brusly and Port Allen High Schools will have scheduling nights/informational meetings to share this information with parents in February. Career Academy classes will include Drafting, Robotics, Medical Assistant, CNA, Culinary Arts, Cosmetology, Welding, Electrical, and Carpentry.



Early College will offer online courses through BRCC, including World Geography, Psychology, Sociology and Environmental Science. Previous dual enrollment offerings will continue as well, and be housed at the high

school campuses. Students who enter the Early College Program will have the opportunity to earn an Associate's Degree while in high school.

"The big advantage for students is that they can get all or a solid foundation of their classes and training for high-paying jobs before they even get out of high school, saving them time and money," said Candice Breaux, Career Academy and CTE Supervisor.

The new Career & Technical Education Building, now under construction, will also open for the 2024-25 school year, and students enrolled in Career Academy courses will be bused from their home schools to take classes at the building.



New Career Academy under construction off Rosedale Road.

Recruitment efforts and job fair

West Baton Rouge schools are a great place to work! That's the message the West Baton Rouge School Board is getting out to teachers this Spring as recruitment ramps up.

"Surveys of our teachers show that they are very positive about working in the West Baton Rouge school system, but all school districts are struggling to recruit teachers," explained

Barbara Burke, Director of Human Resources and Staff Development. "Teachers are retiring earlier, universities are not producing the education graduates they once did, and more teachers with zero to five years are leaving the profession - that's across the board in all districts."

WBR is competitive with other districts in the region by offering starting pay of \$51,033, exceptional new teacher support, tuition assistance for master's degree courses, smaller class sizes, and other perks.

WBR's educator recruitment effort includes a job fair set for March 19, developing strong relationships with university educator programs, attending university job fairs, and advertising through billboards, social media, print, radio and TV advertising. "We work daily to provide our students with the best and brightest teachers, and this effort is in full gear throughout the Spring," Burke said.



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EDUCATORS JOB FAIR • MARCH 19TH

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Mary Lukinovich
Elementary School
Teacher of the Year



Allison Dabadie
Middle School
Teacher of the Year



Dr. Brittany Nelson
High School
Teacher of the Year



Kelley Stein
Principal
of the Year



Dean Cicero
Elementary School
Student of the Year



Aiden Seymour
Middle School
Student of the Year



Emrie LeBlanc
High School
Student of the Year



Robertine Collier
Early Childhood
Leader of the Year



Yashica Murphy
Early Childhood
Teacher of the Year

Best of the West district winners honored at ceremony

WBR Schools announced its Best of the West District Students, Teachers, and Principal of the Year winners at a beautiful ceremony at the Port Allen High Theater on December 11.

The District Students of the Year are:

- Elementary Student of the Year -Dean Cicero, a 5th grade student at Brusly Upper Elementary,
- Middle School Student of the Year - Aiden Seymour, an 8th grade student at Brusly Middle School; and
- High School Student of the Year - Emrie LeBlanc, a 12th grade student at Brusly High School.

The District Teachers of the Year are:

- Elementary Teacher of the Year - Mary Lukinovich, Cohn Elementary School;
- Middle School Teacher of the Year – Allison Dabadie, Caneview School; and
- High School Teacher of the Year – Dr. Brittany Nelson, Port Allen High School.

The District Principal of the Year is Kelley Stein, Principal of Lukeville Elementary School.

The District Early Childhood Leader of the Year is Robertine Collier.

The District Early Childhood Teacher of the Year is Yashica Murphy.

The theater was beautifully decorated in holiday attire for the awards ceremony. The event included videos highlighting all of the school winners, along with the awards presentations. In addition, the more than 250 attendees were treated to a reception with holiday music provided by the LSU Jazz Trio, along with a variety of hors d'oeuvres provided by Walk Ons.

"We congratulate all of the students and educators who won the district honors," said Superintendent Chandler Smith. "They are truly the 'best of the west' as stand out students and educators who go above and beyond in raising the bar at our schools." The district winners will now compete at the state level.

Sponsors of Best of the West ceremony include Walk Ons, Coca Cola, the West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce and Shintech.

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