

News aRound the Hill

A Community Newsletter for Round Hill, Virginia

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Round Hill Responds to COVID-19 Pandemic

Emergency Actions Include Electronic Meetings, Postponed Events, Suspension of Late Fees

The Round Hill town staff and government has adopted a multi-faceted response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including authorizing electronic meetings, suspension of late fees and utility disconnections, and postponement of the town's annual spring events.

According to Town Administrator Melissa Hynes, the Town Council completed its annual budget process in February this year and was able to adopt the budget, approve urgent contracts and pass emergency response resolutions at its meeting on March 19, prior to the implementation of social distancing.

"This quick and decisive thinking has allowed the Town to continue to provide services and maintain town operations without any delays," Hynes said.

The Town then adopted four resolutions to address the COVID-19 emergency. The first confirmed the declaration of local emergency by Hynes. Two others gave the Town Administrator expanded authority to expend funds for

emergency response and to enter into new cellular and trash contracts without further Council approval.

The final emergency resolution suspended utility disconnections and any new late fees or interest on past due utility accounts until 30 days after the ending of the emergency.

"This is a common response from most utility companies statewide," said Mayor Scott Ramsey. "We will not be shutting off water or adding late fees to past-due accounts during this emergency."

"We want residents focused on their health and the health of their community," added Ramsey. "We encourage everyone to pay attention to the recommendations of the CDC, VDH and the local health authorities. It has been inspiring to see so many area residents stepping up to this challenge to help their neighbors."

The Town Council held an emergency meeting on April 28 in which it approved legislation allowing future meet-

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LCPS, Food Banks Provide Free Food in Western Loudoun

The cafeteria staff, bus drivers and custodians of Loudoun County Public Schools are among the local unsung heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each would-be school day since March 13, they have left the relative safety of their homes to prepare and deliver free meals to any child who asks for it.

In Western Loudoun, hot meals are available for pickup at Woodgrove and Loudoun Valley high schools and Round Hill and Lovettsville elementary schools each weekday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Busses are also leaving Woodgrove and Valley daily delivering breakfasts and lunches to students at pre-determined stops.

Round Hill resident Genelda Bartling is the cafeteria manager for Woodgrove High School and has been coordinating and promoting the food delivery and pick up at the school.

"In over 40 years of food service, this is the hardest thing I've ever



PHOTO COURTESY GENELDA BARTLING

Employees from Woodgrove High, Blue Ridge and Harmony Middle and Emerick Elementary schools band together to prepare meals for pickup.

done but definitely one of the most rewarding," Bartling said.

"When I say hard I mean emotionally," she continued. "In the beginning there was such a fear and anxiety amongst us about our health and well-being as well as keeping our students and community safe."

After several weeks of food delivery, though, "we have a system in place now that we feel is working to keep us all safe," Bartling said.

According to the LCPS website, countywide nearly 550,000 meals

have been served since schools closed in mid-March.

But more is being shared across the loading dock than just food.

"We have people that share their stories with us when they stop to get lunch," Bartling said. "Many that are heartbreaking, about their businesses and individual family stories."

In addition to stories, the community has also shared gifts of flowers, cookies, food and homemade face masks.

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PANDEMIC

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ings of the Town Council, Planning Commission, and other Town committees, boards and commissions to be held electronically for the duration of the pandemic. Prior to each meeting, a Zoom link will be published on the meeting agenda and also on the Town website. Written public comments submitted prior to 3 p.m. of the meeting day will be read into the record.

Town Council meetings are scheduled for the first and third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. The Round Hill Planning Commission has postponed meetings for the immediate future; there are currently no active land development applications.

Other pandemic responses by the Town of Round Hill include:

New Drop Box for Payments & Applications:

In addition to the drop box at the rear of the Town Office, a new drop box was installed in front of the Town Office.

One Utility Crew On-Site: The safety of utility operators is critical to the operations of the water/sewer system. A three-person crew, on a rotation, will remain on-site to operate the water system, operate the sewer treatment plant, perform routine inspections, and to address any safety issues. Additional crews will be available on an on-call basis.

Town Office Closed to Public: To help mitigate the effect of COVID-19, the Town Office is closed to the public. Town services will continue with staff available by phone, email or video meeting

Playgrounds CLOSED, Parks OPEN: Playgrounds (areas with play structures of any kind) are closed until further notice. Parks will remain open for passive use. No congregating or group activities are allowed.

Sleeter Lake Park: The Town has seen a surge of visitors to Sleeter Lake Park and has been working to mitigate the impacts to the park (such as planting new grass where visitors have parked on the grass).

Critical Capital Projects: All FY2020 critical utility and general capital projects are still moving forward as planned. Staff is currently on track for planning and launching FY2021 utility and general capital projects on July 1.

Hometown Festival: The May festival has been postponed to Saturday, Oct. 10. A small socially-distanced wreath-laying ceremony will be held to honor veterans on Memorial Day; details on how to view the ceremony will be posted on the Town website and Facebook page.

Appalachian Trail Festival: The June festival has been postponed to the weekend of Sept. 12.

Arbor Day Ceremony: The Arbor Day Ceremony was postponed to the fall (date to be announced).



PHOTO COURTESY GENELDA BARTLING

Woodgrove High School Principal Sam Shipp helps prepare meals for delivery over spring break in April.

FOOD

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Bartling says the food pickup ritual "has become a 'field trip' for students and pets alike; it is their one time during the day that they can get out and about."

For more information on the food services provided through LCPS, including an interactive map to identify the nearest bus stop for mobile service, visit lcpshelthy-cafe.org. The Loudoun County School Board announced on May 5 that the meals program will continue through the summer.

In addition to LCPS, several other community organizations are offering options for free meals or food in Western Loudoun County, including:

- **Round Hill United Methodist Church:** The RHUMC on West Loudoun Street operates a food pantry available for residents of Round Hill. Contact Luci Loeffler at 703-431-6801 for information.

In addition, the church is currently transforming its Little Free Library in front of the church into a "Blessings Box" where people in need can pick up an emergency meal when the RHUMC Food Pantry is closed.

Users of the Blessings Box are asked to sanitize the door handle by using one of the Clorox wipes located inside of the box and to only touch items they definitely plan to take in order to limit germ exposure as much as possible.

- **Tree of Life:** Free Community Dinners To-Go on Thursday nights from 5:30-6:30 or until meals run out at 520 E. Main Street (across from Dollar General). Tree of Life is also offering free weekly food deliveries. If you need food assistance, call Tree of Life at 540-441-7920 or fill out the form at www.tolministries.org/.

- **Mobile Hope:** The Mobile Hope bus comes to Western Loudoun weekly. Items available include grocery bags with fresh produce and non-perishable food, as well as prepared food, personal care items, diapers, toys and books. The bus stops at Main Street Commons, 119 N 16th St., Purcellville, between 10 and 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays. For more information, visit www.mobilehopeloudoun.org/



PHOTO COURTESY TOWN OF HILLSBORO

Signs along Woodgrove Road direct traffic during Rt. 9 closures.

ROUND HILL STARTS TO SEE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC FROM ROUTE 9 CLOSURE

Residents of Round Hill may begin seeing an increase in the amount of traffic coming through town, especially along Evening Star Drive, as a result of the closure of Route 9 in Hillsboro, which began May 4. Full closure is expected to last into mid-to late-June.

The accelerated schedule for the road closure “will allow for higher productivity and efficiency, but most critically it will improve the safety for residents, workers, school children and motorists as it coincides with Governor Northam’s ongoing ‘stay-at-home’ executive order, which has resulted in a significant reduction in daily traffic,” according to a press release from the Town of Hillsboro.

Daily commuters are expected to follow the signed detour along Route 340 and Route 7. Local traffic around the Hillsboro area is being diverted to Stony Point, Woodgrove, Alder School and Hillsboro roads to reconnect with Route 9 eastbound or westbound at both ends of the work zone.

The Town of Hillsboro set up mobile signage on Woodgrove Road to reinforce the detour onto Alder School Road and, at the Town of Round Hill’s request, recently installed signage to direct all traffic that continues on Woodgrove Road south of Alder School Road to Route 7 through Evening Star Drive.

“While we hope that the large percentage of commuter traffic opts to use either the Rt. 340 primary detour or the secondary detour of Alder School Road, the Town of Round Hill realizes that there will be some commuters who continue on Woodgrove Road south of Alder School,” said Round Hill Mayor Scott Ramsey.

“Evening Star Drive is a safer road than Main Street,” Ramsey explained. “It is two lanes, is divided for most of its length, and has sidewalks that are set back from the road. Main Street is currently not striped and at some points is not wide enough for cars to pass one another safely if a third car is parked on the side.”

Additionally, Main Street itself will be under construction as part of the Main Street enhancement project to widen and stripe the road and add parking spaces, curbs, gutters and sidewalks, before the project in Hillsboro is finished.

ROUND HILL TOWN ELECTION POSTPONED UNTIL MAY 19

The Round Hill Town Election will be Tuesday, May 19. Voters will cast ballots for Mayor and four Town Council seats.

In lieu of in-person voting, all residents are encouraged to request and submit an absentee ballot. The deadline to request an absentee ballot has been extended to May 12, and all ballots must be returned by election day to be counted. To date, 38 ballots have been requested and 14 returned.

Town residents may also visit the Registrar before election day at 750 Miller Drive, Suite C, Leesburg to do curbside voting 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and on Saturday, May 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Polls will be open at the Round Hill Center from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on May 19. Curbside voting will be available and encouraged, and there will be a strict limit on no more than 10 people inside the polling place at one time, including workers.

The Towns of Purcellville, Middleburg and Lovettsville have postponed their elections to Thursday, June 4. Hamilton will be voting on

May 19 along with Round Hill.

“I encourage everyone to vote absentee if possible, and otherwise take advantage of the curbside voting being offered for this election,” said Mayor Scott Ramsey.

ROUND HILL LAGS IN CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATES

Round Hill is lagging in self-response rates to the US 2020 Census compared to nearby jurisdictions. By now all Round Hill households should have received a Census form in the mail, but as of May 2 only 65% of area households had completed and returned the document.

Federal and state funding from distributed taxes and benefit programs are determined using census numbers. Consequently, census counts are crucial both to Loudoun and Round Hill.

Each household that does not respond could deprive Loudoun of \$20,000 annually in funding. The Town of Round Hill receives approximately \$400 each year per household as a per capita share of state-collected revenues such as sales taxes and taxes on phone and cable bills. These are taxes residents have already paid elsewhere coming back to Round Hill.

Households that do not respond by mail will need to be visited in person by a Census worker later this summer. Please avoid this necessity and risk by returning your form. If you have lost or did not receive your form, visit www.2020Census.gov and follow the prompts for not having a Census ID.

Census Self-Responses

Lovettsville	78%
Purcellville	76%
Loudoun	72%
Leesburg	71%
Round Hill	65%
Hamilton	64%
Middleburg	37%