



Reenactors play music on the old courthouse square.

CITY PRIDE

MORGANTON, NC

March 2014 • Morganton's Citizen Newsletter



Tired of standing in line? Just pay online!

Did you know that you can pay your City utility, cable and tax bills online at no charge? That's right, the City of Morganton offers a free payment option to residents who want to avoid the line and pay online.

Residents can pay bills online with an e-check at no charge, and residents can review their utility usage and history via the City's Payment Portal.

To review your utility, cable or tax statements, and to pay City bills online, visit the City website at www.ci.morganton.nc.us and click the "Pay Bills Online / My Utilities" link at the top right of the page. The link takes customers to the City of Morganton Payment Portal.

Once at the Payment Portal, customers must register and then add their utility accounts. After adding an account, customers can view account information including billing history, usage details and

See **PAY ONLINE** on Page 2

City working to redesign and improve zoning ordinance

The City of Morganton Development and Design Department is in the early stages of a zoning ordinance update; the goal is to simplify the City's zoning ordinance, be proactive by offering alternatives for certain types of development, and create a flexible atmosphere for economic development.

The Development and Design Department, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the consultant group Benchmark, Inc., have been working on the project since October. The group has held four workshops and anticipates that another five workshops will be required before

a draft ordinance is ready for public review.

Development and Design Director Lee Anderson said the new ordinance is a result of the City's Mission 2030 Plan, which was approved by the City Council in 2009. The Mission 2030 Plan set the framework and the basis for all updates and changes being recommended to the City's zoning ordinance and development regulations.

Anderson said that the City Council and staff want to bring more business and industry into Morganton, and to encourage positive development within the community. To do so, Morganton

will need to find more ways to be proactive and business friendly in its zoning regulations.

"Morganton's new zoning ordinance, just like the past one, will serve as the primary rule book for the way development will occur over the next 20 years throughout the community," Anderson said. "The new zoning ordinance will not only shape the physical environment we live in, it will also affect economic activity within our community."

The new ordinance will propose to reduce the number of zoning districts from thirteen (13) to six (6).

See **ZONING** on Page 2

Community House brings on new staff

The City of Morganton would like to introduce Chef Sarah Sasser Williams and Event and Business Development Coordinator Becca Stephens, who recently joined the staff at the Morganton Community House. Both Williams and Stephens bring a strong set of talents that will help establish the Morganton Community House as "the" meeting, banquet and special occasion location in Morganton, Burke County and the region.

Main Street Department Director Sharon Jablonski, who now oversees the Community House operations, has challenged Williams to develop new recipes and a new menu for the Community House, and she has challenged Stephens to improve marketing and draw more business to the venue, all while remaining friendly and accessible to Morganton's local civic clubs, groups and citizens.

"We are constantly working to improve the Community House as a venue, and I believe that bringing Sarah and Becca on board will be a tremendous help with our efforts," Jablonski said. "I invite everyone to come meet our team, check out our facility, and plan to host your next occasion at the Morganton Community House."

From its inception in the 1930's until today, the Morganton Community House has served as a



Event and Business Development Coordinator Becca Stephens, left, and Chef Sarah Sasser Williams, right, recently joined the staff of the Morganton Community House.

gathering place for clubs, civic groups, receptions and community functions in Morganton, Burke County and surrounding communities. With a full service kitchen the Community House is equipped to handle banquets, small conferences or provide the perfect meeting space for training. The Community House has wi-fi, can meet your AV and technical needs, and carries full ABC permits.

Morganton City Council

- Mel Cohen, Mayor
- John H. Cantrell, Mayor Pro Tem
- Forrest A. Fleming
- S. Sidney Simmons
- Ronnie Thompson

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Work progresses on City's new communications tower

Construction of the City's new monopine communications tower at 105 Mountain View St. is progressing. Contractors started excavating the foundation for the tower in late February. The new tower is scheduled to arrive at the first of April, and the project should be complete by mid-May.

So far, workers have removed the old water tank located on the site and set a temporary communication pole. NHM Constructors of Asheville is

performing the work.

Once completed, the new 150-foot monopine will support communications for City departments including the Public Safety Department, Public Works Department, the Electric Department, the Water Resources Department and CoMPAS Cable.

The project will cost \$421,136. The City Council approved the project and the funding in 2013.



Contractors started excavating the foundation for the City's new 150-foot monopine communication tower located at 105 Mountain View St. in Morganton Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2014. The new monopine will replace an old water tank that stood on the site since the 1920s.

ACC Chili Cook-Off!

Friday, March 14, 2014 • 11:00 am

The 20th Annual ACC Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser for the Downtown Development Association will take place Friday, March 14, 2014 at the Community House (on King Street) from 11:00 am to 1:30 pm. A bargain-priced \$7.00 ticket buys all-you-can-eat chili with all the fixin's, cornbread, salad, dessert and drink! (If you're busy, you can get it to go!)

Chili Cook-Off tickets are available at the Main Street Office, 112 B. W. Union Street, or at More Lace Boutique, 602 S. Green Street, Suite 100 at Morganton Station. Tickets may also be purchased from DDA Board Members and are available the day of the event at the door (cash or check only).

Pay Online

From the front

balance history, and pay their bill online.

"The free e-check option has become very popular, and more and more people choose to pay online line every month," said City Finance Director Karen Duncan.

"We are happy that the City of Morganton can offer customers an option to pay online without having to pay an extra fee."

Remember, paying with an e-check is free, but Point & Pay does charge a 2.6% fee with a minimum charge of \$1.50 to pay with a credit card. Customers can use Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express.

Bring Your Bill to the Drive-Through

In addition to online payment option, residents can pay bills at City Hall and via the City Hall drive-through. You must bring your bill with you to pay via the drive through, and you cannot use your debit or credit card to pay via the drive-through. Also, you can drop your payment at one of two drop boxes at City Hall, one at the main entrance under the water tank and one at the entrance to the drive through.

Zoning

From the front

The new districts will be: Low Intensity District (LID), Medium Intensity District (MID), High Intensity District (HID), Central Business District (CBD), Exclusive Industrial District (EID), and a State Institutional District (SID). The new ordinance will focus primarily on the impacts various uses have on the community. The low intensity district for example will allow "low impact" uses such as residential, some recreational activities, home

occupations, cemeteries, day care centers, etc. The high intensity district will allow "high impact" uses such as high density apartment complexes, hospitals, schools, commercial and retail uses.

"Under the new zoning ordinance, the business impact will determine where the business can locate," Anderson said. "And, if a business or developer is willing to work within certain parameters to mitigate negative impacts on the community, they may be able to locate where they couldn't before."

Anderson said he expects to release parts of the ordinance for review as early as April, and

a draft zoning map may be ready for review by then as well. That information will be posted on the City website.

The public will have time to review the proposed updates, ask any questions about the proposed changes, and make any requests for changes to be considered. Later in the year, the City will host a public drop in meeting for the public to talk with City staff about the proposed ordinance changes. Anderson said the Planning and Zoning Commission will likely make a recommendation on the new ordinance in August and City Council could review and decide on the ordinance as early as October.