

## City Calendar

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**Sunday, 7/24**

**Sunday Pops with E'Lon JD Project**

3:00pm @ Courthouse Square

**Monday, 8/1**

**City Council Meeting**

6pm @ City Hall

**Tuesday, 8/23**

**Human Relations Commission**

5:15pm @ Mt. View Recreation Center

**Historic Morganton Festival, 9/9 - 9/10**

**Downtown**



## Enjoy the market!

*Farmers Markets are continuing through the end of October! Enjoy Wednesday Mini-Markets from 11a-2p at 111 N. Green St., or Saturday Markets from 8a-12p at 300 Beach St.*

## Courthouse Square Ribbon Cutting

The stage was set to officially unveil Downtown Morganton's newest attraction. On May 6, 2022, the public was invited for tours and the first TGIF concert of the season on the new Courthouse Square to mark its grand opening.

"We cannot wait to show everyone the finished product after all the renovations that happened on the Courthouse Square," said Director of Cultural and Creative Development Sharon Jablonski. "We are so excited to hold the first-ever official event on the new amphitheater stage and offer tours of the new grounds. This space is so much more welcoming, open, and inviting than the old Courthouse Square, and we know people are going to enjoy seeing all the improvements we've made."

The Courthouse Square's Grand Opening comes after more than a year of construction saw the grounds completely revamped while maintaining as much historical integrity as possible. Crews spent time doing extensive utility work to move utilities underground, and graded the grounds to make them more inviting and easier to access so the public can enjoy the grounds more often between events. Additionally, the rock wall around the square — which was beginning to fall down — was renovated using rocks from the original rock wall to be more structurally stable and give the wall a fresh look.

After work on the grounds and utilities was finished, construction on the new amphitheater stage got underway. The new stage provides a

permanent venue for all types of live entertainment nestled among ample new greenspace on the Courthouse Square.

Several art installations and landscaping work put the finishing touches on the project. The backdrop of the stage itself is an art installation completed by Miki Iwasaki, a California-based artist hired with the help of the North Carolina Arts Council. Morganton's Community Mandala, created by City of Morganton Project Designer Michael Berley, sits near the true north meridian line on the square. Three original jail doors from the old jail that housed the Burke Arts Council have been transformed into an art installation as a way to pay homage to what came before the project's completion. Behind the stage, at the corner of E. Meeting St. and S. Sterling St., there is a bioretention cell, or rain garden, which is a naturally landscaped area that traps and treats stormwater.

The result of all of this work is a venue that is sure to be a regional attraction, as it combines progressive thinking, ample greenspace, public art, and an enjoyable location for anyone visiting Downtown Morganton.



City staff, City Council, and State Officials gathered Friday, May 6, for the Courthouse Square ribbon cutting that marked the completion of the square's renovations.

## Practice good greenway etiquette

Welcome to summer! During this past year more and more people have taken advantage of our beautiful Catawba River Greenway.

On greenway trails such as ours, bicycles yield to pedestrians. Yielding means slowing down, establishing communication, be prepared to stop if necessary and pass safely. ALL users should stay to the right, be prepared for and expect that someone else (walker, jogger, skate boarder, roller blader, or cyclist) may come towards them or up from behind.

- Walkers, joggers, skaters, and bicycle riders should travel in a predictable and consistent manner so as not to cause accidents.

- Greenway users should use only one earphone if listening to music in order to hear traffic coming up from behind.

- Keep all pets on a leash, and out of the way of other trail users.

- Keep bicycle speeds lower on the greenway. Adjust speed for congestion and surface conditions.

- Be courteous and notify other users when passing. A friendly greeting, stating "passing on your left" works well.

If we all follow these simple multi-use trail rules our experiences on the Greenway will be that much more pleasant. Be on the lookout for each other, share the trail, and we hope to see you outside!

## Council passes budget for fiscal year 2022-2023

"It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward; how much you can take and keep moving forward. That's how winning is done!" Rocky Balboa (2006).

"In some ways, the last two years have seemed to last forever and in other ways, it seems like time is flying by us. COVID-19 has changed much about how we do business and how we live life", said City Manager Sally Sandy in her letter to the Morganton City Council concerning the 2022/2023 budget. Due to the last couple of years, the City is experiencing, like everyone else, rising costs for materials and fuel, staffing shortages, and extended delivery times. Even with these complications, the City Staff led by Sally Sandy has proposed a balanced budget supporting the City's vision of Morganton.

The 2022/2023 total budget is \$82,143,873, which is \$4,372,306 or 5% less than the revised budget for 2021/2022. This includes several ongoing major projects like the Downtown Greenway Connector, College Street Redesign, Rand Street Substation, and Bethel Park Phase 1. The City has also rebudgeted for large water and wastewater projects as staff attempt to secure funding assistance. "Never in our history has so

much public funding been available. The challenge is to crack the code on accessing it.", Sandy said.

City Manager Sandy said, "Affordability of services for our citizens remains a priority." This budget recommends holding the current tax rate of \$0.57/\$100 value in place, and recommends holding the current downtown special tax rate at \$0.14/\$100 value in place. The budget also recommends an electric rate decrease. The rate reductions will range from 2% to 14% depending on the type of customer. Annual savings will range from a household amount of \$60 to commercial savings between \$1,300 and \$15,000. For the first time in many years, there is no recommended rate increase for TV service from CoMPAS Cable, and phone service rates will drop \$3.00/month beginning in the fall.

To aid the City's budget the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has awarded the City with \$4,835,619 in funds. These funds will help the City complete a sewer project on Highway 181, and will help the City upgrade the sludge system at the Wastewater Plant, install an equipment washing station, and allow the City to complete approximately four years of typical resurfacing at one

time.

The City Council continues to value master planning, community investment and quality public services. The Council supports conservative financial management, but not at the sacrifice of the City of Morganton's growth and commitment to secure a bright future.

"As the day-to-day COVID concerns have morphed into supply chain challenges, rising fuel costs, escalating material costs and rising inflation pressures, there is still more to be completed. We will do this work together. This budget proposal allows us to ensure Morganton continues on such a path forward. It provides the framework for how we will continue "to punch above our weight-class" for the benefit of this community." Sandy stated.



### MORGANTON CITY COUNCIL

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Butch McSwain • District 1

Chris Jernigan • District 2

Chris Hawkins • District 3

Wendy Cato - Mayor Pro Tem • District 4

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