

COMMUNITY NEWS

News & Events for the City of Vestavia Hills • February 2023

A joint publication of the City of Vestavia Hills, Vestavia Hills City Schools & Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce



Jeff Downes,
City Manager
City of
Vestavia Hills

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Happy New Year everyone! It is that time of year – a time that many of us examine and re-examine our personal and professional goals. The City of Vestavia Hills is no different. During the month of February, your elected officials will engage in a strategic planning session to evaluate the near-term priorities of City government.

While this is a regular process for Vestavia Hills, this year is notable in many ways. This year marks a “turning of the page” – moving away from implementation of the multi-year capital improvement program known as the Community Spaces Plan, to the City Council assessing its next series of priorities to improve our city. We all recognize that the investments in recreational facilities will require a programming element that remains a priority; however, many community input tools have brought to light the next series of priorities for investment considerations that involving staff dedication and financial investment. And, in our form of government, the elected body collectively charts the path on how to proceed with these opportunities.

It is refreshing that my staff and I get to engage with Council in this focused strategic planning exercise over two full days. This planning will guide our efforts over the next 12+ months and will chart the course for both our human resources, as well as our financial resources. While the priorities will be determined at the conclusion of this year's strategic planning process, I can write at this time what the surveys and public input gathering have highlighted as points for serious discussion. While these items are very important, they will also require significant commitment of capital resources within the City budget:

- Vestavia Hills residents have repeatedly called for **an increase in the number of walking and biking trails, as well as expansion of sidewalks**. 339 residents weighed in on sidewalk needs by engaging with our Vestavia Hills Listens portal, and our community survey provided feedback that trail systems are a top priority.
- **Public stormwater system improvements** continue to echo in the hallways of City Hall. Our city was founded in 1950 and many of the public stormwater structures have reached the end of their useful lives. We recognize that this same experience is being felt by residents who have failing private stormwater structures. While we are constitutionally limited in our ability to react to private matters, we can do our part in the public realm. This will be a large portion of the strategic discussions before the City Council.

- **We are blessed with a very well-respected public safety team.** Both the Police and Fire Departments get high marks from our residents. We have very expensive equipment and personnel needs that must be considered so that we can maintain this high level of service in our community. This does not include the safety demands associated with our traffic systems and the increasing costs associated with such expense categories.

My previous articles in the Community News have highlighted how the City of Vestavia Hills is a lean operation that functions admirably with the lowest revenue requirements of the region. Also, we have been able to remain AAA rated by outside financial evaluators based upon our extraordinary financial stewardship. These facts strengthen our ability to respond to infrastructure and safety needs. We are pleased to be able to react to the community demands and look forward to Council prioritization of actions that will resolve the challenges that we face. In future messages, I will highlight the results of strategic planning and the next chapter of community strengthening activities, but I also want to emphasize that these items for study and action will place financial demands on the City. The thoughtful and deliberate manner with which the City leadership addresses these concerns should give confidence to our residents. I know it does for me as my observation is that our strategic planning efforts produce great results that have been positively referenced by many neighboring communities.

THANK YOU!

The Vestavia Hills Beautification Board would like to say **thank you to the residents of Vestavia Hills** for taking part in this year's annual Light Up the Hills event. It was a beautiful display that reflected the heart of Vestavia Hills so well.

We would also like to **thank the Boy Scouts of the Mountain Scouts Tree** sale for selling appropriately sized trees for our event at their lots, as well as delivering to many of the city's neighborhoods.

Let's plan to make **2023 our best ever and continue to Light Up Vestavia Hills!**



Ashley Curry,
Mayor
City of
Vestavia Hills

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

I hope that all of you had a great holiday season and that the New Year is going well for you. Hopefully, your New Year's resolutions are still intact.

I remember mentioning in my newsletter from a year ago, that our city had several New Year's resolutions for 2022. In no particular order, we wanted to finish New Merkel House and renovations to Cahaba

Heights Park and Wald Park, as well as complete the infrastructure project (streets and sidewalks) in Cahaba Heights and to complete the new Civic Center. I am thrilled that the bulk of those resolutions have come to fruition with just a few items remaining to be done.

One of our resolutions for this year includes the completion of a passive park environment for the Altadena Park. These park improvements include the possibility of connecting walking trails, building a parking area and pavilion, as well as other amenities, such as a canoe launch into the Cahaba River, playgrounds and a disc golf course.

There will be other City initiatives for this year that will be more clearly defined as our Council holds our yearly Strategic Planning session this month.

One of our initiatives for this year is a revitalization of arts activities in Vestavia Hills. With the formation of an Arts Council, we will draw on the traditional arts events in our city, such as the Dogwood Festival, art shows and concert series at Wald Park. Our Arts Council will explore other ways to promote and encourage the arts and humanities in the City. We want to promote cultural events to include visual arts, performing arts, the education community and other organizations that promote arts events.

We also plan to house the Vestavia Hills Sports Hall of Fame in our new Civic Center. There will be future updates as this project gets underway.

This past month we experienced wide swings in temperature. We had record low temperatures with wind chill temperatures near zero degrees. A week later we had sunny days with temperatures in the 70s. It reminded me of the old adage that if you don't like the weather in Alabama, stick around a day or two and it will change.

Well, we will have to see what happens on Ground Hog Day, February 2. Maybe Punxsutawney Phil will give us some indication of what to expect. We will wait to see if he sees his shadow.

Regardless of the weather, it is nice to know that Valentine's Day is February 14. It is certainly one holiday that's sure to warm hearts. Take time to show some love to others in addition to your own significant other.

Only Rain in the Storm Drain!

What happens when debris enters storm drains?

- It is **ILLEGAL!** Violators who put leaves, clippings or other materials in the storm drains are subject to fines or, when warranted, additional enforcement by the City.
- Clogged storm drains may result in **flooding**, creating safety hazards and causing property damage.
 - Rotting leaves cause **algae blooms in water bodies**, harming plants and animals and reducing water quality.
- Debris clogging storm drains can be a breeding ground for **rodents and insects**.
 - Cleaning out clogged storm drains **costs taxpayers money**.



**Todd Freeman, Ed.D.,
Superintendent**
Vestavia Hills
City Schools

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Teachers are the most important factor inside the school that contribute to the success of children in their academic endeavors. They are the guides, mentors and challengers for students to broaden the depth of their knowledge and skills. All of us can remember at least one teacher who fits that description and was a major

influence in our lives. For more than half a century, teachers in Vestavia Hills City Schools have maintained a legacy of excellence in their profession. And each year, we celebrate that legacy by honoring educators from the past and present.

Annually, our Board of Education recognizes the immeasurable impact of former educators in our system. This year, we welcomed five new inductees into the VHCS Hall of Fame: Kelly Bagby, Brian Cain, Karen DeLano, Kimberly McBride and Audrey Pharo. Their résumés include 110 years of combined experience in their respective positions in VHCS and other systems. Each of them has a legacy that influenced thousands of young people. You can read the resolutions honoring each of them on our website.

The legacy continues with the annual recognition of our Teachers of the Year. During its January meeting, the Board of Education recognized nine teachers who embody the standard of excellence in Vestavia Hills City Schools. Congratulations to: Carmen Sullivan (Cahaba Heights), Kellie Miller (Dolly Ridge), Meg Walker (East), Kalyn Randolph (Liberty Park Elementary), Megan Humphries (West), Amy Woodard (Liberty Park Middle), Michaela Spence (Pizitz), Emily Hall (Freshman Campus) and Amanda Jordan (VHHS).

VHCS is best able to achieve our mission through accomplished, excellent teachers who genuinely care for their students. Because of your unparalleled support, we are able to employ 110 more teachers than the state provides funding for. This ensures that we have lower class sizes, award-winning arts programs, an abundance of Advanced Placement courses, career exploration classes in secondary grades, academic interventionists and much more. The results of this commitment are evident in the success of our students. As their success continues to increase, so does the expectation for excellence. That is a sign of a vibrant community!

1Rebel 1Future is our vision to elevate success and protect our legacy of excellence. It will, in part, strengthen the professional growth opportunities for our teachers while adding to the high-quality academic programs and support we provide for our students. You can learn more about the *1Rebel 1Future* vision for protecting our legacy of excellence by watching Board of Education meetings and listening to The Vestavia Hills City Schools Podcast at www.vhcs.us.



Looking for a new way to spice up your Mardi Gras celebration? **Try something new, support local Vestavia Hills businesses and enjoy a Mardi Gras party ... all in one day!**

Buy your ticket TODAY for a progressive dinner and after-party in Cahaba Heights!

Not interested in a progressive dinner? No worries ... Join the fun at the Cajun Steamer after party! Party then get away with the Admiral Brandy Brass Band, indoor/outdoor bar, food and Mardi Gras give-aways!

For more info to purchase your ticket(s), visit https://bit.ly/dogwood_fest.

Options to Participate

Option 1: Pedal Your Way. Assemble your friends and buy seats on one of two pedal carts. Each cart comes with a driver, seats 14 and will be decorated for Mardi Gras. These carts are a rolling party! And don't worry ... everyone pedals together to make it relaxing and fun! There is also an electric assist motor to help move things along!

Option 2: Take a Trolley Ride. Purchase a ticket for one of 30 seats on a trolley bus and leave the driving to us! Don't miss out!! Once the tickets are sold, there won't be any more!

Option 3: Self-Guided Tour. Buy a ticket and drive yourself to each location along the route. Or skip the dinner and go straight to the after-party at Cajun Steamer.

Interested in sponsoring this event?

Contact Cinnamon McCulley at cmcculley@vhal.org or 205.978.0143.

ADULT SPORTS TO KICK-OFF THE NEW YEAR!

Silver Sneakers at the Civic Center

The Vestavia Hills Civic Center is now home to Silver Sneakers classes! Cardio and Strength, taught by Kristin Long, will be every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 11:15am! This fitness class combines a variety of exercises to help increase cardio endurance while strengthening muscle.

Adult Basketball – Lunch Time Play

- **Game Play:** Monday through Friday from 12-1:30pm. Upper gym is for adult-only play for all Civic Center members.
- **Registration:** Not required
- **Location:** Civic Center Upper Gym (1090 Montgomery Highway, 35216).
- **Cost:** Civic Center members only; no additional cost for members
- **For More Information:** Contact Doug Rogers at 205.978.0178 or drogers@vhal.org

Adult Basketball League

- **Game Play:** Monday and Wednesday leagues. Monday is recreational and Wednesday is competitive. 10-game seasons with upper and lower seeds playoffs. League and captains meeting is January 23 at 6pm at the Civic Center (1090 Montgomery Hwy, 35216).
- **Registration:** Open from January 23 to February 6. Register at https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/selectactivity_t2.wcs
- **Location:** All games to be played at Civic Center (1090 Montgomery Highway, 35216)
- **Cost:** \$400 per team for Vestavia Hills residents; \$500 per team for non-residents. (No out-of-city individual fee.)
- **For More Information:** Contact Doug Rogers at 205.978.0178 or drogers@vhal.org

Pickleball League – Quarterly

- **Game Play:** First quarter play will take place January 3-March 31. Practice and open play times will be 9am-12pm, Monday through Friday. Scheduled matches will be held one or two days per week. The league is open to anyone at least 13 years of age and interested in playing pickleball.
- **Registration:** Open from January 3 to February 27. Register at https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/selectactivity_t2.wcs
- **Location:** All games and practices to be played at Civic Center (1090 Montgomery Highway, 35216)
- **Cost:** The league is free to members who have an annual Civic Center membership. All others must pay \$50 per quarter to participate in the league. All players (members and non-members) must register in order to participate.
- **For More Information:** Contact Sandi Wilson at 205.978.0166 or swilson@vhal.org

Dogwood Dink

The Dogwood Dink Pickleball Tournament brings pickleball enthusiasts together for a day of fun and enthusiastic game play! The tournament will be played at the Vestavia Hills Civic Center on Saturday, February 25, from 8am-4pm. Participants are guaranteed a minimum of 3 games. Early bird registration for Vestavia Hills residents will be available beginning January 9 until February 1; registration will then open to the public and will close Tuesday, February 14. Registration will be online at https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/selectactivity_t2.wcs. Don't have a partner? Don't worry ... We will match you with a suitable partner on the day of the event! For more information, contact Lucinda Harmon (lucindaharmon@gmail.com) or Mary Berryman (mary.berryman@icloud.com). *Sponsored by the Vestavia Hills Beautification Board.*

ARBOR WEEK IS THIS MONTH!

Arbor Week in Alabama is the last full week of February, and now is a wonderful time to celebrate a new season in life by planting a tree. When you plant a new tree, that tree can become more than a part of the landscape – it can become part of your home and your community. Most of us have climbed a tree at some point in our lives. There may even be a few special trees that stand out in your own memories!

The Vestavia Hills Girl Scouts partnered with the City to plant young trees and seedlings as part of this year's Girl Scout Tree Promise program. The Good Roots program of the Alabama Power Foundation provided the funding for the trees that were planted earlier this year at various Vestavia Hills city parks. We thank our Girl Scouts for their service and welcome these newly planted "members" of our community!

Vestavia Hills has held Tree City USA® designation since 1992. Planting a tree invests in our future and provides generations to come with healthy, mature trees. Please contact Melissa Hipp (205.978.0100, mhipp@vhal.org) if you are interested in helping to maintain our Tree City status participating in Keep Alabama Beautiful.





**Michelle Hawkins,
President**
Vestavia Hills
Chamber of Commerce

CHAMBER NEWS

The new year happenings for the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce have been super exciting and busy. We are so thankful for our new Chamber offices in the spectacular Civic Center – the building is amazing and offers so many opportunities for our community of all ages and interests. Please come by and visit us soon!

We are building new networking programs and enhancing established ones. Our ribbon cutting events are an

excellent networking and energetic support system for our Vestavia Hills business community. We were thrilled to have had 28 ribbon cuttings last year and we kicked off a fun ribbon cutting in January at the Golfce, a cool business and social event space. Please join us and support the new businesses in our wonderful city.

The Chamber has established a thriving relationship with the City of Vestavia Hills, and enjoying collaborating with Cinnamon McCulley, Assistant City Manager. We together have been igniting awesome events around the up-coming Dogwood Festival! Plan to join and participate in all the many events surrounding this fabulous, fun festival.

The Chamber staff has grown, and we are thrilled to have Tracy Thornton, Director of Membership and Marketing, join our team. She has great positive energy and the passion for Vestavia Hills and is the creative talent who has started our new Lunch and Learn networking events. This new monthly event provides members with a one-hour knowledge learning session, a lunch and great networking opportunities. Our January Lunch and Learn session was “Business Cyber Security” brought to us by Clearwinds Technology. This month’s session, scheduled for February 22, will be “Social Media Promotion” by Smith Limited Agency. To join our event or find out how to be a lunch sponsor, please contact our office at 205.823.5011.

We are enthused with the success of the new Coffee and Classrooms monthly event. This opportunity connects schools directly with business; it is an incredible way to network with principals, teachers, students and PTO. Each month a different Vestavia Hills school will host our Coffee and Classrooms. On February 23, 2023 from 9-10am, we will be at Vestavia Hills East Elementary -- we would love for your business to join us!

Please reach out to me, Tracy or any of our staff to get more involved with the energy of our Chamber. We are here for our Vestavia Hills businesses and community and happy to help in anyway. Our communications manager, Katie Woodruff, is the logistic genius who coordinates our events and maintains our membership database, as well as keeping members informed with engaging newsletters and event reminders. Annilyn Warner, our office manager, is our savvy social media promoter and coordinator who handles our ribbon cuttings, Coffee and Classrooms and Lunch and Learn networking events. Join our events, come by, call or email us anytime!

I hope everyone has a lovely February and a Happy Valentine’s Day. Remember to shop local for your special someone. Thank you so much for granting me the honor to serve Vestavia Hills! I truly believe this is the BEST community to live, work, dine, shop and play - I’m grateful for a community that chooses to work together toward “A Life Above!”

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Events and dates subject to change. Visit vhal.org/calendar for the most up-to-date event information.

February 2023

2 Design Review Board,

Executive Conference Room
6 p.m.

9 Planning and Zoning Commission

Council Chamber
6 p.m.

13 Senior Citizens Association Luncheon

Civic Center, Dogwood Room
11:30 a.m.

13 City Council Meeting

Council Chamber
6 p.m.

14 Valentine’s Day

14 Chamber Luncheon

Vestavia Country Club
11:30 a.m.

16-17 Council Work Session – Strategic Planning

Council Chamber
8 a.m.

16 Board of Zoning Adjustment

Council Chamber
6 p.m.

18 Mardi Gras Celebration

Cahaba Heights, Time TBD

20 President’s Day

20 Council Work Session

Council Chamber
6 p.m.

21 Parks and Recreation Board

Civic Center
7:30 a.m.

27 City Council Meeting

Council Chamber
6 p.m.

Vestavia Hills DOGWOOD FESTIVAL

Spring into Fun!

The Vestavia Hills Dogwood Festival activities celebrate all of the incredible things Vestavia Hills has to offer!

There is something for everyone at the Dogwood Festival!

February

- 11:** Pinkies Up Tea Party
Vestavia Hills Methodist Church,
9-11am
- 18:** Mardi Gras Party
Cahaba Heights, 4-8pm
- 25:** Dogwood Dink
Pickleball Tournament,
Vestavia Hills Civic Center,
8am-4pm

March

- 4:** VHHS Superhero Fun Run
VHHS, 8am
- 4:** VHHS Rebel 5K Color Run
VHHS, 9:30am
- 4:** Dog Days at SHAC
Sicard Hollow Athletic Complex
10am-2pm

- 10:** Spring Sports Kick-off & Concert
Wald Park, 5-9:30pm
- 11:** Dogwood Days: Cahaba Heights
The Heights Village, 10am-8pm
- 16:** Live After 5
Vestavia City Center, 5pm
- 18:** VHHS RISE Kids Day
VHHS, 9-11am
- 24:** Historical Society Self-Guided
Tours Begin
- 26:** Spring Break Staycation Begins

April

- 4:** Dogwood Luncheon
Vestavia Country Club
11am-2pm
- 7:** Easter Eggstravaganza
Wald Park, 11am

- 7:** Mastering Happy Hour
Vestavia City Center, 2-6:30pm
- 8:** Battle of the Bands
Rocky Ridge Business District
5-9pm
- 13:** Dogwood Days: Liberty Park
4-7pm
- 15:** VHHS RISE Day
VHHS, 4-10pm
- 17:** Historical Society Presentation
Vestavia Hills Civic Center, 2pm
- 18:** Dogwood Prayer Breakfast
Vestavia Country Club, 7-9am
(tentative)
- 20:** Lunch Bunch & Historical Tour
- 21:** Concert Series
Wald Park Grand Lawn, 7pm

- 22:** Wing Ding
Vestavia Hills City Hall, 4-7pm
- 30:** Heights Hangout
The Heights Village, 2-7pm



Scan for detailed
event info
or visit
[https://bit.ly/
Dogwood_Fest](https://bit.ly/Dogwood_Fest)

Want to include your Vestavia Hills event in the Dogwood Festival? Contact Cinnamon McCulley at 205.978.0143 or cmcculley@vhal.org.



MEET RAY MORROW

Ray Morrow is a Public Services Crew Leader for the City of Vestavia Hills. Ray is a long-time employee of Vestavia Hills – 24 years! He manages landscaping and cuts the grass city-wide. And, while cutting with a boom tractor is a challenging

aspect of his job, Morrow says the most exciting part is meeting new people around town.

Ray and his wife, Tonya, have been together for 33 years! If you see Ray around the City, be sure to say hello!

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