

# COMMUNITY NEWS

News & Events for the City of Vestavia Hills • April 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

I frequently label the City's Annual Strategic Planning Work Session as the most important two days in the annual city government work cycle. Once again, this year's effort did not disappoint! As we near the completion of the Community Spaces Plan projects, our Mayor and City Council dedicated this year's Strategic Planning Session to drilling down on issues of

relevance for making our city all it can be. Whether it was hearing briefings from each department on the operational matters of most importance, spending a couple hours extensively reviewing the results of the recent citizen survey, touring areas in line for positive refreshment, or hearing about external opportunities unique to the city, our governing body was able to digest many different priority considerations and settle on several focus areas for the near term.

At the highest level of consideration, the Mayor and Council prioritized how they would utilize a finite amount of resources during the next 12 months or so. We'll take a look at those prior to examining specific project priorities. This exercise ranked the following items to be of the most importance to our city's well being at this snapshot in time and absent other contextual considerations:

1. Public Stormwater System Investments
2. Transportation System Improvements
3. Recreational Trails and Park Improvements
4. Sidewalk Extension Considerations
5. Continued Investment in Public Safety Opportunities

As the elected officials began a look at specific projects that support the above ranked priorities, the following project ideas ranked near the top of the action list for 2023. This should not preclude other

ideas from becoming actionable; however, these items will receive top effort as the City staff allocates its resources to react positively to Council's desires.

In the category of internal operations, the Council made it clear that they want to continue the sound financial policies that have resulted in the City receiving the highest credit rating available in the marketplace and to carefully expend any financial surplus that makes itself available based upon stated priorities. Also, from an internal operations perspective, they strongly support efficient services that utilize digitization strategies wherever possible for ease of use by the public, opportunities for public engagement or improving the management of operations.

From an external perspective, embracing the public projects that are generated from stormwater master planning efforts and implementation of objective and targeted investment with road paving management strategies were strongly made a part of the plan. A focus on traffic improvement projects, such as the Blue Lake/Sicard Hollow Roundabout, received high marks. Last, but not least, the Council unanimously endorsed, at the highest possible level, beautification of the Highway 31 corridor from right-of-way landscaping investments to collaborative strategies with private sector partners along the corridor.

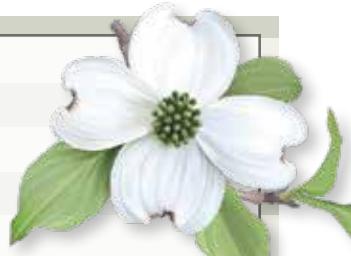
As previously stated, this is not a full dissertation of items deemed to be a focus for this year; however, they do mark the items most paramount to the Mayor and Council. Expect to see reports throughout the year on how headway has been achieved in these areas. It is exciting to embark on the next chapter of community improvement with the clear direction that results from annual strategic planning.

## DOGWOOD LUNCHEON

Make plans to join us for the annual Vestavia Hills Beautification Board Dogwood Luncheon to be held April 4, 2023 at Vestavia Country Club.

The silent auction will kick off at 10:30am and the luncheon will begin at 11:30am. Heidi Elnora, an Alabama-based female entrepreneur, will serve as this year's guest speaker. Heidi is a wedding dress designer, inspirational speaker, television personality and industry leader. Visit <https://www.vestaviabeautiful.com/dogwood-luncheon> to read more about Heidi.

Tickets are \$35 each and must be purchased in advance. Tickets may be purchased via Venmo (@vh-dogwood) or by check (payable to: Vestavia Hills Beautification Board). For both Venmo and check payments, include your full name in the notes section, along with the names of attendees to be seated at your table, if applicable. For more information, email [dogwoodluncheon@gmail.com](mailto:dogwoodluncheon@gmail.com).





## MAYOR'S MESSAGE

March certainly kept us guessing about the weather. Regardless of that, I hope you were able to attend some of the Dogwood Festival events during March. The weather caused us to postpone SpringFest at Wald Park on March 3, but I hope you were able to attend the Dogwood Festival Fashion Show on March 9. This is the first time the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce has hosted a fashion show and we are thrilled that it was held in the new Civic Center.

Opening day for the Vestavia Hills Girls Softball League was held on Sunday, March 5. Beautiful weather complemented an exciting day – a parade of the teams on their decorated floats, an opening ceremony recognizing each individual player and the coaches, and the opportunity for me, along with Councilor George Pierce, to throw out the “first pitch” of the season. The girls had a great time (and so did I)! This is what sports is about. Thank you to Angela and Danny Marshall for organizing the event and thanks to all the coaches that give of their time for the girls.

Let's talk about April. According to Dictionary.com, April comes from the Latin verb *aperire*, which means “to open.” Many like to believe the name of the month describes the flowers and trees opening in springtime. Accordingly, there are numerous observances held in the United States that celebrate the spring of the year. There is National Garden Month, Keep America Beautiful Month and National Wildlife Week.

Of course, April 1 is well known as April Fools' Day. Be mindful of jokes and pranks that are orchestrated on this day! The most well-known prank occurred on April 1, 1957. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) broadcast a current affairs program purporting to show Swiss farmers picking freshly grown spaghetti, in what they called the “Swiss spaghetti harvest.” The BBC was flooded with calls of citizens wanting to purchase spaghetti plants.

The Dogwood Festival has a variety of events scheduled for April, including the Dogwood Prayer Breakfast featuring guest speaker Lindy Cleveland from Unless U. Unless U provides services for adults with developmental disabilities and their families. With job training, life and social skills, they promote independence for their clients. What a great service they provide. We are incredibly grateful to have them in Vestavia Hills.

There are also major religious events take place in April:

- Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims as a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. Starting on March 22 of this year, it lasts till April 21.
- Passover, also called Pesach, is a Jewish holiday that celebrates the Biblical story of the Israelites escape from slavery in Egypt. It begins on April 5 and lasts until April 13.
- Easter is on Sunday, April 9, and Christians will be celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Regardless of your religious preference, I hope you will reflect on the many blessings we have.

Last, but not least, National Volunteer Week is a significant event that will be observed the week of April 17-21. This is an opportunity to recognize the impact that citizen volunteers make for our quality of life in Vestavia Hills. Volunteers have a huge impact on our various boards and commissions. Volunteers have a huge impact on our parks and recreation leagues and clubs. Let's not forget the Beautification Board, our garden clubs, the Sybil Temple Foundation, our civic clubs and many more individuals that volunteer their time for the good of the City.

Our recently revitalized Arts Council is looking for volunteers to promote, advocate and foster the arts and art culture in Vestavia Hills. Our goal is to promote fine arts, visual arts and performing arts in our community. For more information, visit <https://vhal.org/community/arts-council>.

I'll leave you with a quote from Mark Twain, “In the Spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours.”

The poster features a colorful background with overlapping circles in green, pink, blue, and yellow. The text is centered and reads:  
*32nd Annual*  
**DOGWOOD PRAYER BREAKFAST**  
*Vestavia Hills*  
  
Below the main title, the date and time are listed:  
*April 18, 2023 at*  
**Vestavia Country Club**  
7:00 a.m. Buffet Opens  
7:30 a.m. Program Begins  
  
A box contains the speaker information:  
This year's speaker is Unless U  
Founder and Executive Director,  
**Lindy Cleveland.**  
  
At the bottom, ticket information is provided:  
Tickets are **\$25** and may be purchased  
online at [www.vestaviahills.org](http://www.vestaviahills.org) or by  
calling the Chamber of Commerce  
at 205.823.5011.



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

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Orville and Wilbur Wright are considered two of the most influential innovators in the history of our nation. The brothers left a legacy as pioneers of flight. And while neither had a college degree, they did possess limitless creativity ignited by their love for learning about many academic disciplines including science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); and the humanities.

Birmingham entrepreneur, philanthropist and professor, Dr. Sanjay Singh, best sums up the need for both humanities and STEM in our schools. He says the keys to success for our students are that they have command of both logical and abstract thinking skills. STEM is to logical thinking what the humanities are to abstract thinking. Put another way, STEM helps us answer the “how;” humanities help us answer the “why.” This is a compelling point for immersing our children in both as early as possible.

The humanities have long been an indispensable part of a well-rounded education. Courses in English, history, arts and world languages bolster communication skills such as articulation, asking complex questions and listening. Children who study another language improve reading comprehension in their primary language while developing an appreciation of different cultures. According to Participate Learning, students who are fluent in more than one language tend to have increases in academic performance and memory while being more adept at logic.



### TECHNICAL RESCUE BOAT TRAILER

In 2022, the Vestavia Hills Fire Department took possession of a new boat trailer for use during water rescue incidents. The trailer was custom built by Captain Chad

Crowe and was designed to increase efficiency. It currently carries two inflatable rescue boats (IRBs), one metal john boat and two kayaks. One of the IRBs is powered by a jet prop, which enables crews to navigate easier in faster moving water.

Variations in water levels, water speeds and terrain can increase the difficulty of managing a water rescue. Having multiple boats on one trailer allows fire personnel to have the necessary equipment immediately available regardless of the variations of each incident. And, in addition to responding immediately, fire personnel are also able to return to service in a timely manner at the conclusion of an incident.

Vestavia Hills High School students study world languages for a variety of reasons that include college admission requirements, preparation for a career or interest in other cultures. Last year, nine out of every 10 VHHS graduates took at least one world language class in high school. 36 students earned college credit in a world language because of their score on Advanced Placement tests.

This year, more than 400 middle school students are taking French, German or Spanish. At VHHS, more than 1,300 students are taking classes in one of those languages as well as American Sign Language or Latin. Combined, that is almost half of our middle and high school students! In addition, 116 high school students were awarded the Seal of Biliteracy, meaning they are highly fluent in at least two languages. Clearly, having a world language experience is something our students value.

Protecting our legacy of excellence means investing in bolstering academic experiences for our students. With the support of the community for the *1Rebel 1Future* plan, we will add world language and STEM classes for children in kindergarten through fifth grade. This will give them an edge in a competitive world and provide an extra stretch of runway to prepare them for success after graduation.

I encourage you to watch our Board of Education meetings to learn more about our vision to protect the legacy of excellence our community expects. You may view current or past Board meetings at [www.vhcs.us/boelivestream](http://www.vhcs.us/boelivestream).



VHFD has used the trailer recently to respond to incidents on the Cahaba River and during flood incidents in the City. Our department is also able to respond to mutual aid calls in other municipalities when our resources are needed. Fire personnel continually train on swift water incidents, and having this trailer is a huge asset in helping them perform their jobs.



Maloy Baker



Mary Paten Bean

# Vestavia Belles

2023-2024



Julia Bochnak



Meredith Bochnak



Ridley Tate Box



Barclay Brown



Isabel Carroll



Lauren Christian



Claire Collins



Camille Davidson



Virginia Davis



Berkley Dobbins



Madeline Douglas



Laden Falls



Kate Faulkner



Reese Fetner



Amelia Gentle



Ellery Gilbert



Molly Hager



Hannah Hudson



Kate Hurst



Sidney Johnson



Addison Mann



Ava McCleary



Campbell Moore



Kennedy Moreland



Mary Kenyon Nall



Photo not available:  
Sophie Nix



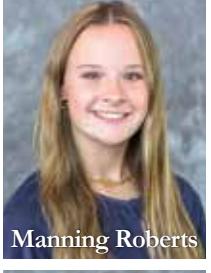
Elizabeth Oswald



Elizabeth Peters



Addison Ringer



Manning Roberts



Ellie Robicheaux



Ava Robinson



Elizabeth Rohner



Maci Rutherford



Madalyn Saia



Riley Shadrick



Wynn Stoffregen



Caroline Thames



Caroline Tyndall



Halle Vickers



Caroline Welling

## PARKS & LEISURE SERVICES

### Activities for Active Adults (55+)

- Join us for fun, fellowship, and lunch at New Merkel House every Monday-Friday. Lunch is served daily at 11:45am.
- New Merkel House offers stretching classes on Mondays at 10:30am, Tai Chi on Tuesdays at 10:30am and chair yoga on Thursdays at 10:30am. The Vestavia Hills Civic Center offers senior dance classes on Mondays at 6pm and Silver Sneakers exercise classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 11:15am. Tuesday's programming includes Learn2Play, which teaches attendees a new fun game and Walk My Way, an exercise program where participants will walk around the indoor track to their favorite music.
- Join us on Monday, April 10, join us for a delicious lunch at the Civic Center with entertainment by the Hoover Songbirds! Only \$8 per person. Call 205.978.0166 to reserve your spot today!
- Lunch Bunch will be on Thursday, April 20 at the Niki's West following a Dogwood Festival sponsored riding tour of historic Vestavia Hills homes! Meet at the Civic Center at 9:30am for free transportation. Lunch is at your discretion; reserve your spot today by calling 205.978.0166!
- New Merkel House and the Civic Center will be closed on April 7 for Good Friday.

### Youth Spring Sports

**Vestavia Hills Swim and Dive.** This program is for children ages 5-18 who are able to swim 25 yards independently. The program is administered by a volunteer board, in conjunction with Vestavia Hills Parks and Recreation, and we are accepting volunteer board members. If you are interested in joining the board, contact us at [vestaviaswim@gmail.com](mailto:vestaviaswim@gmail.com).

- Swim & Dive Season:** May 30-July 29, 2023
- Location:** Vestavia Hills Aquatic Complex
- Registration:** Opens April 1 – [https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/selectactivity\\_t2.wcs](https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/selectactivity_t2.wcs).
- Cost:** \$200 per participant

### Youth Flag Football.

- Game Play:** Open to boys and girls. Grouped by grade: 1st & 2nd Grade; 3rd Grade; 4th Grade; 5th & 6th Grade; 7th-9th Grade. Practices begin on August 15 and games begin on September 10.
- Location:** TBD
- Cost:** \$110/player (resident); \$130/player (non-resident)
- Registration:** Open April 3-July 24 – [https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/selectactivity\\_t2.wcs](https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/selectactivity_t2.wcs)
- More Information:** Contact Mike Sullivan at 205.978.0167 or [msullivan@vhal.org](mailto:msullivan@vhal.org).

### Aquatic Complex Memberships

Summer 2023 memberships will be available for purchase starting **April 1!** Visit <http://bit.ly/VH-poolpass> to register and purchase a membership online:

- \$75 individual (0-54yo)
- \$35 senior adult (55+)
- \$300 family (families of 4 or more; families of 3 or less should purchase individual memberships)
- \$10 daily guest pass (guests must be accompanied by a member; max of one guest per member per day)

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### April 2023

- 4 Dogwood Luncheon\***,  
Vestavia Country Club, 10:30 a.m.
- 6 Design Review Board**,  
Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- 7 Municipal Offices Closed** in observance of Good Friday\*\*
- 10 Senior Citizens Association Luncheon**, Civic Center, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.
- 10 City Council Meeting**,  
Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 11 Chamber Luncheon**,  
Vestavia Country Club, 11:30 a.m.
- 13 Planning and Zoning Commission**,  
Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 15 Vestavia Hills Garden Club Yard Sale**, Scout Square, 7 a.m.  
*Rain Date: April 22*
- 17 Vestavia Hills Historical Society**,  
City Hall, 2 p.m.
- 17 Council Work Session**,  
Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 18 Dogwood Prayer Breakfast\***,  
Vestavia Country Club 7:00 a.m.
- 18 Parks and Recreation Board**,  
Civic Center, 7:30 a.m.
- 20 Board of Zoning Adjustment**,  
Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 22 Wing Ding**, City Hall, 4 p.m.
- 24 City Council Meeting**,  
Council Chamber, 6 p.m.

\* Ticket required

\*\* NOT a sanitation holiday;  
routes will run as normal

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# 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!**

### April Events

- 4:** **Dogwood Luncheon.** Vestavia Country Club, 10:30am
- 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:** **Vestavia Hills Garden Club Yard Sale.** Scout Square, 7am  
Rain Date: April 22
- 15:** **VHHS RISE Day.** VHHS, 4-10pm
- 17:** **Historical Society Presents: Shades Mountain Baptist Church.**  
Vestavia Hills City Hall, 2pm
- 18:** **Dogwood Prayer Breakfast.** Vestavia Country Club, 7am
- 20:** **Lunch Bunch & Historical Tour.** Vestavia Hills Civic Center, 9:30am
- 21:** **Concert Series: Mountain Grass Unit with Will Stewart.**  
Wald Park Grand Lawn, 7pm. Sponsored by the Library in the Forest
- 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)



## NOTICE OF SPECIAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Notice is hereby given that a special municipal election will be held in the City of Vestavia Hills in the State of Alabama on Tuesday, the 9th day of May, 2023, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., Central Time, at which there will be submitted to the qualified electors of the said City, for their determination by ballot, the following proposition:

Shall the City of Vestavia Hills be authorized to levy and collect at the rate of 3.54% (or 35.4 mills on each dollar) of the assessed value of taxable property in the City (being an increase of 9.8 mills), the special ad valorem tax authorized at elections held on April 28, 1970, May 8, 1990, and March 11, 2014, and now being levied at the rate of 25.6 mills; said tax at the increased rate of 35.4 mills to be levied and the proceeds thereof to be used by the Vestavia Hills City Board of Education for public school purposes in the City; said increase to be effective for each tax year of the City commencing with the tax year for which taxes of the City will become due and payable on October 1, 2023, and continuing for each successive tax year thereafter, without limit as to time.

The said election shall be at the following regularly established voting places in the City at which shall be cast the ballots of the electors customarily voting at the said respective places:

Polling District #	Polling Location
1	Shades Mountain Baptist Church 2017 Columbiana Road Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35216
2	Vestavia Hills Methodist Church 2061 Kentucky Avenue Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35216
3	Mountaintop Community Church 225 Centerview Drive Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35216
4	Vestavia Hills Civic Center 1090 Montgomery Highway Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35216
5	Cahaba Heights Baptist Church 3800 Crosshaven Drive Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35243
6	The Church at Liberty Park 12001 Liberty Parkway Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35243
Absentee Ballot Box	Vestavia Hills City Hall 1032 Montgomery Highway Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35216

By order of the City Council.

# Thank YOU

The Library of the Forest Staff & Board would like to thank the **FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY** for their generous donation which purchased new computers, software and equipment for our creative team. The Friends' support is invaluable to our longevity and impact.



# LIVE IN CONCERT



**APRIL 21 • 7PM**  
**WALD PARK | FREE**



VESTAVIA HILLS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### SHADES MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH:

From its origins to today

**Monday, April 17 at 2pm – Vestavia Hills City Hall**

Join the Vestavia Hills Historical Society for an engaging presentation about Shades Mountain Baptist Church.

Founded in 1911, SMBC is the oldest established church in the city limits of Vestavia Hills. The presentation will include musical selections by the SMBC Jubilee Singers, as well as highlights of the church's history and a review of their current community involvement initiatives.

Interested in joining the Vestavia Hills Historical Society? Contact Shelia Bruce at [sbruce8710@gmail.com](mailto:sbruce8710@gmail.com).

## 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!**



*City of Vestavia Hills*  
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205.978.0100  
[www.vhal.org](http://www.vhal.org)

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children's boutique

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Children's  
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[ChildrensAL.org](http://ChildrensAL.org)

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