



City of Takoma Park City Manager Comments

Report of February 17, 2021

More Wintry Weather is Coming!

(Ha! This was the title of an item last week, too!)

Amazingly, we have even more winter weather predicted. This time the bad weather is focused on Thursday, with snow early, then predicted to change to sleet or freezing rain later in the day.

Thursday trash, recycling and food waste collections will be postponed to Saturday.

Friday collections are planned to take place on Friday, but collection may be delayed. We will get the word out if there are other changes. In the meantime, please prepare to stay safe!

February is Black History Month

Thank you, Black Music Educators!

For this week's item, I would like to share some information about the role of Black music educators in the D.C. area during and after segregation, through the experience of one person, Hortense Pace Taylor.



Ms. Taylor grew up in Washington, D.C. and, as a bright and musically talented child, received training from professional Black music educators in the District. Under segregation, she attended the prestigious Dunbar High School, graduating in 1939. D.C. music educators inside and outside of the school system worked to ensure their Black students would go to college, and they had connections with the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music in Ohio. Ms. Taylor was one of the students that benefited from these connections, graduating from Oberlin in 1943 and then earning her Master's Degree from Columbia University. After teaching music in New York and West Virginia, she returned to Dunbar High School to serve as a vocal teacher and as a sponsor of the Honor Society. She rose through the ranks to lead the D.C. Public School music education program from 1967 to her death in 1978 at the age of 55. During her tenure, Ms. Taylor started a program which brought prominent jazz artists to the schools and established the All-City Chorus, both of which advanced the professional opportunities of students in the D.C. Public School system. Under Ms. Taylor, All-City Chorus members toured the Soviet Union, appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show and the Chorus still holds an annual concert (now named for her) at the Kennedy Center.

The connections of the Black music educators among the public schools, Howard University and D.C. arts institutions were a powerful force for success for many Black young people in Washington, D.C. While I was not able to meet Hortense Taylor – my husband’s mother – before she died, I did meet many of the music educators with whom she worked. Their contributions to the D.C. area are impressive and worthy of honor during Black History Month.

COVID-19 Related Information

We continue to advocate for more, and more fairly-distributed, COVID-19 vaccinations. Go to the [Montgomery County Vaccine Information](#) page to learn more and to pre-register if you are in a category that can do so. You can also call 240-777-2982 to pre-register with the County. There are more ways to sign up for vaccines through the [Maryland Vaccine Website](#). The categories eligible for vaccines on the State site often differ by site, and registration availability changes day to day. Right now, it is every person for themselves. Please help neighbors sign up with as many sites as they are eligible for. As the federal roll-out of vaccines gets underway, there may be additional ways to get vaccinations, and hopefully it will be simplified and more equitable. In the meantime, **keep wearing your masks!**

COVID-19 testing in Takoma Park

Even though all of the attention is on vaccinations right now, it is still important to have regular COVID-19 testing. Free, no appointment COVID-19 testing is being held on Saturdays at the Takoma Park Recreation Center, 7315 New Hampshire Avenue from 10 am to 5 pm. For this and other testing options, please see the information here: [Montgomery County Testing Sites](#).

Update on COVID-19 Response

A detailed presentation was provided to the City Council at its Priorities Retreat on January 16. The presentation has been posted on the website: [COVID-19 Response Presentation 01162021](#)

Each week, the City’s COVID-19 Dashboard is updated. The most recent one is here: [COVID 19 Dashboard](#)

Vaccinations received by City staff: So far, only Police Department officers and staff have been able to receive vaccinations from Montgomery County. Several other City staffmembers have been able to obtain vaccinations on their own from other providers. We are working to try to expedite vaccinations of Recreation staff to be able to provide before and after-school child care when schools reopen.

Police Department vaccinations: 20 of 40 sworn officers have received both shots; 6 still need their second shots; 14 have not chosen to be vaccinated (some have had COVID). Of 28 civilian staff and crossing guards, 7 have had both shots, 7 still need their second shots, 1 will get their first shot in March, and 13 have not chosen to be vaccinated (some have had COVID).

Of other City staff, 7 have received at least one shot from other providers, 61 have indicated they want to be vaccinated, and 29 have either said they do not wish to receive a vaccination or they have not responded.

Constant Yield Rate Issued for FY22 Budget

The State Department of Assessment and Taxation issues its Constant Yield Rate Certification in mid February. According to the document received last week, in order to gain the same amount of property tax revenue in FY22 as is projected to be received in FY21, the City would need to lower the real property tax rate by one cent. The current rate is \$0.5397 per \$100 taxable assessment and the Constant Yield Rate is \$0.5295.

The State projects a small increase in the City's net assessable real property base. If we kept the City's tax rate at \$0.5397, the City would be expected to receive an additional \$262,358 in property tax revenue in FY22.

All Takoma Park properties will have their triennial reassessment in the fall of 2021, with notifications going to property owners around December. The new information will be the base for the FY23 through FY25 budgets. Note that even when reassessments occur, tax assessment phasing in and caps continue to be in effect, so that increases in taxable assessments are limited.

Free Tax Assistance Available in Takoma Park

AARP Tax-Aide Program provides free federal and state (Maryland) tax preparation services for low to moderate-income taxpayers who live or work in Montgomery County. You do not need to be a senior or a member of AARP to receive this free service! This tax season, Takoma Park will serve as a drop-off location for taxpayers. The Tax-Aide Program is operating under COVID-19 protocols, developed by AARP and within the CDC, state, and county guidelines. This year, there will be no-in-person tax preparation. Instead, clients will schedule two brief appointments in Takoma Park to drop-off tax documents and pick up completed tax returns.

To schedule an appointment to drop-off your tax paperwork, you **must first** call the **scheduling telephone line at 240-777-2577**. Volunteers will schedule a time for you to come to the Takoma Park drop-off location beginning Wednesday, February 24, 2021. Before that appointment, a tax counselor will contact you to review all the paperwork needed.