

My Wellsburg

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Community News

Letters to the Editor

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Newsletter Objectives

The objectives of this newsletter coupled with the My Wellsburg website are to engage people, businesses and organizations in the revitalization efforts of Wellsburg and to keep the community informed of news, activities, and events in the area.

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Did you know?

In Wellsburg only [freeholders](#) can be appointed to the Zoning Commission.

Refer to the City Charter, Section 23, Zoning Commission.

By opening two-way communication with the Wellsburg community, we hope to find those with the desire to renovate our city. There will be many opportunities to express your thoughts on what Wellsburg can become.

If you're not satisfied with the status quo and you're willing to expend some effort to fix it, send me an email and let's get started.

[Email Rick Starck](#)

Angels Among US

Many people love Wellsburg and give, never asking for recognition or thanks. The Angels Among Us column will tell their story and offer thanks for their contributions. If you know of such an Angel, email their story to us at admin@mywellsburg.com.

Publication Schedule

The My Wellsburg Newsletter is published on the second Wednesday of each month.

Business and Investments

Property for Sale/Rent

A new feature being developed for the website is a database of Wellsburg properties for sale or lease.

List Your Property

If you have property for sale or rent, you can have a free listing on the MyWellsburg.com website. Simply email the listing information to admin@mywellsburg.com. Be sure to include your email address and daytime phone number so we can verify the listing.

City of Wellsburg

Vacant Building Code By Richard Starck

Since 2012 Wellsburg has had a Vacant Building Ordinance (VBO) to inspect and monitor vacant buildings before

Water Line Update Interview with Project Foreman

It's easy to be concerned about water quality when filling your glass with tap water exposes discoloration and debris.

they deteriorate and become public health and safety hazards. In 2000 there were about 100 VBOs in the United States. The monetary crisis of 2007-2008 resulted in a flood of foreclosures. Cities, counties, and even two states defensively enacted VBOs to combat the surge in poorly or unmanaged vacant buildings. There are now over one thousand VBOs across the country.

Wellsburg's VBO is cast from the same mold as most other cities, a required registration with punitive fees and fines. Ask yourself, is this type of ordinance effective? Most likely, a structure falls into disrepair when the owner can't afford the maintenance, property taxes, insurance, and utilities. Adding another layer of expense only exacerbates the problem.

An alternative approach would be to encourage the sale of a vacant structure before its condition degenerates. The owner would benefit from the early sale and avoid the nastiness of liens, taxes, and demolition expenses. Who would be the buyer? Asking the City of Wellsburg to step up is not appropriate. The City lacks the funding, staff, and expertise to manage such a program. Encouraging local investors to consider purchasing, rehabilitation, and resale seems like a good answer.

A licensed contractor and I recently examined a distressed house. We intended to purchase, rehab, and then sell. After inspection of the home, we concluded that extensive water damage caused by a leaking roof and broken

In September 2021, Independent Enterprises of Oakdale, PA, began replacing the antiquated water lines. The project area extends from 12th Street to 2nd Street along Main, Charles, and Commerce Streets. It was estimated to take one year to complete.



Dorcil Stewart, the project foreman, provided a progress update and offered insights into the difficulties encountered. The old mains, consisting of 4-inch and 6-inch lines, have been replaced and upgraded with new 8-inch PVC. Dorcil commented that his crews found old pipes with a manufactured date of 1909. In one case, an old 4-inch line was corroded so bad it only had a 2-inch interior diameter. In another case, an old 4-inch line connected a fire hydrant where a minimum of a 6-inch line is required. After correcting the problem, Dorcil's comment was, "Now they can put out fires."

A systemic issue confronting the construction crews was a lack of maps to indicate the location of the 110-year-old lines. Crews often had to guess where to excavate to find the lines, resulting in numerous water line breaks. Some of these old lines had degraded to the point where simply

windows had raised the rehab cost beyond any reasonable market value. Although we passed on making an offer, it illustrates the importance of finding a property before it deteriorates.

The My Wellsburg website is currently designing a property listing capability. The listings are free, and the public is encouraged to take advantage of the service.

Drive around our City and count the distressed buildings. Each site detracts from the beauty of our community and pulls down property values. We all share the burden of this hidden expense.

In conclusion, I recommend that Wellsburg drop its Vacant Building Ordinance because it is unenforceable and does little to solve the vacant structure problems. Although this article offered one idea, I am sure there are other solutions. Please help our community by emailing your thoughts and ideas.

[Email Rick Starck](#)

Grant Writer

City Council voted to hire Norm Schwertfeger as a grant writer for Wellsburg. The city has long needed a person to fill the position. Mr. Schwertfeger served 18 years as a Brooke County Commissioner and has 21 years of experience with West Virginia University leading to his

uncovering them led to leaks and breaks.

The good news is the construction is nearing completion about four months early. The new lines are in place, and only restoration of streets and sidewalks remain. The many line breaks and resulting contamination may have raised the blood pressure of some residents, but to be realistic, this was a challenging project.

Living in a historic city has many benefits, but all old cities have to contend with infrastructure issues. Wellsburg is no exception. We have more water lines to replace, wastewater runoff issues to address, and water plant upgrades, to name a few. Keep the faith.

Police Moving to Middle School

The Brooke County Board of Education is drafting a contract following last month's City Council approval on a one-year trial basis, the move of the Police Department into the former Wellsburg Middle School building. The Board of Education offered the space free of charge to benefit from a police presence near the Alternate Learning Center school rooms.

The Police Department more than doubles its office space in a flood-free central location. With the additional space, private interviews can now be conducted that is not possible in their currently confined quarters. Finally,

current position of Regional the city gains by reusing the space
Coordinator of Community vacated in the City Building.
Development. The next step is for the
Council to prepare and present a **Thank you, Chief Allman,** for
contract to Mr. Schwertfeger. creating a Win-Win-Win situation!

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