

Blanchard E-News

VOLUMN 93 ISSUE 3

20 MARCH 2020

April Fools' Day

Wednesday, April 1st or All Fools' Day, a holiday of uncertain origin, is known for practical joking and celebrated on the first of adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1564, the as New Year's Day by cultures as varied as the Hindu. The holiday is considered to be related the Vernal Equinox, which occurs on March 20th. The English gave April Fools' Day its first widespread celebration during the 18th century.



April. Prior to the date was observed Roman and the to the festival of

The Blanchard Masonic Lodge located at 10th (OK-76) and Main Street will be serving an AYCE breakfast from 7am-11am on Saturday, March 28th. The cost is only \$6.00. Proceeds will benefit the Blanchard High School Cheer.



For more information contact Kyla Moiton @ 405.760.6372. Thank you for supporting our youth!

Calendar

Events

MARCH

- 28th ~ AYCE Breakfast
- 1st ~ April Fools Day
- 12th ~ Easter Sunday

Meetings

MARCH

- 24th ~ Traffic Court [**Canceled**]
- 24th ~ City Council
- 24th ~ BMIA

BMIA Agenda

The Board of Trustees of the Blanchard Municipal Improvement Authority (a public trust) will meet in regular session on Tuesday, March 24th, immediately following the

City Council meeting, 300 N. Main Street to discuss, consider and take appropriate action on the following agenda items:

- ✓ Acknowledge receipt of Construction Permit No. WL000044200119 for the construction of 1,526 L.F. of 8-inch potable waterline, 792 L.F. of 12-inch potable waterline, and all appurtenances to serve the Old Town Area; and
- ✓ Consent Agenda.

The next meeting will be **Tuesday, April 28th** at **6:00p.m.** The entire Agenda Packet is posted on the City's website at <https://www.cityofblanchard.us/bmia/agenda/bmia-agenda-3242020>.



City Council Agenda



The Blanchard City Council will meet in regular session on Tuesday, March 24th, at 6p.m., 300 N. Main Street to discuss, consider and take appropriate action on the following agenda items:

- ✓ Resolution calling for an election on Tuesday, November 3rd on Ordinance No. 718 levying and assessing a 5% hotel/motel tax;
- ✓ Letter of Support for Delta Public Transit;
- ✓ Resolution approving the installation of a street lite at the intersection of Paulk Drive and 10th Street NW;
- ✓ Acceptance of Matt Alexander as Vice Mayor;
- ✓ Nomination/Appointment of a new Vice Mayor to serve until April 2021;
- ✓ Call by the Mayor to hold a special meeting in April for specified purpose(s); and
- ✓ Consent Agenda.

The next meeting will be **Tuesday, April 28th** at **6:00p.m.** The entire Agenda Packet is posted on the City's website at https://www.cityofblanchard.us/sites/blanchardok/files/agendas/packet_council_agenda_3.24.20.pdf.

Coronavirus Precautions

- Wash your hands frequently;
- Cough into your elbow and dispose of tissues in a wastebasket;
- Keep surfaces in your home clean - Alcohol is a good disinfectant;
- Supply of food staples and necessary medications - 30-day supply;
- Household supplies;



- Know the website for your local health department, visit for information;
- Get flu vaccines;
- Plan for a support system in case older family members fall ill; and
- STAY HOME if you have the symptoms.

Easter Sunday



Many Christians celebrate Easter Sunday as the day of Jesus Christ's resurrection, which is written in the New Testament of the Christian bible. According to the Gospel of John in the New Testament, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb where Jesus was buried and found it empty. An angel told her that Jesus had risen. Christians worldwide have celebrated Easter for centuries.

However, the roots of the Easter holiday's traditions and activities can be traced back to pagan celebrations. The name Easter is believed to come from *Eostara*, the goddess of rebirth.

In early times the Feast of Eostara celebrated earth's resurrection and rebirth. Strict Puritans would have nothing to do with Easter - it was merely a human institution - in the past. Charles I, king of England, declared the day as scriptural as Sunday in 1647 but Parliament contradicted him in print and abolished it with other church festivals.

The Easter date depends on the ecclesiastical approximation of the March equinox. In 325CE the Council of Nicaea decided that the Easter date would be the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the March equinox. Easter is therefore delayed one week if the full moon is on Sunday, which lessens the likelihood of it falling on the same day as the Jewish Passover. Eastern Orthodox churches in many countries such as Greece still figure their Easter date based on the Julian calendar.

Easter eggs and the Easter Bunny are both fertility symbols, holdovers from the feast of Eostara. Other symbolic parallels include the pagan joy in the rising sun of spring, which coincides with Christians' joy in the rising Son of God, and the lighting of candles in churches, which corresponds to the pagan bonfires. The symbol of the cross and images of Jesus Christ, through paintings or statues, are remembered on Easter Day. Easter is **Sunday, April 12th**.

Fair Housing Month



April is 'Fair Housing Month' in Blanchard. The City encourages each citizen to implement the provisions of the City's Fair Housing Ordinance and requests that any person, or group of persons, planning activities to promote fair housing to inform the City Clerk of

such activities. A copy of the Ordinance may be obtained from the Office of the City Clerk.

Federal Legislation

Congress Enacted the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, Including Paid Sick Leave, Expanded FMLA Protections and Mandated COVID-19 Health Insurance Coverage

On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, the President signed HR 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (the FFCRA), which contains several different provisions (also called Acts), which are now law. The new law will have a significant impact on employer benefits and leave policies, particularly for those employers with fewer than 500 employees.

In short, the FFCRA: 1) provides a new paid sick leave entitlement for work absences related to the coronavirus (COVID-19); 2) extends and expands FMLA protections in certain situations; 3) provides tax credits for employers to help address related employer costs of these benefits; and 4) requires group health plans to cover COVID-19 related tests, services and other items without cost-sharing. Generally, the first three provisions apply to employers with fewer than 500 employees. They take effect April 2, 2020 (15 days after enactment), and will be in effect through 2020. The fourth applies to any group health plan, takes effect immediately, and will expire when HHS determines that the public health emergency has expired. Importantly, the paid sick leave and expansions to FMLA do not apply to employers with 500 or more employees. Below is a description of these FFCRA provisions.

Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act:

This provision applies to employers with fewer than 500 employees and requires employers to provide up to 80 hours of paid sick time to individuals who are:

- Diagnosed with COVID-19, self-isolating or obtaining a diagnosis/care for COVID-19 symptoms.
- Under quarantine to comply with an official order or recommendation because of COVID-19 exposure or symptoms.
- Providing care to a COVID-19-diagnosed individual or an individual seeking a diagnosis or care for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Caring for an individual affected by a school or other care facility closing.
- Experiencing similar conditions specified by HHS (in consultation with the DOL and Treasury).

This applies to all employees (regardless of how long they've been employed). Full-time employees may use up to 80 hours of sick time, while part-time employees may use proportionally less time, based on the average number of hours the employee works over a two-week period. An employee may not carry this sick time over into the next year, nor is an employee entitled to payment of unused sick time

upon separation from employment. Emergency paid sick leave does not diminish the rights and benefits to which an employee is entitled under state or local law (such as a state sick leave or paid family and medical leave law), a collective bargaining agreement or an existing employer leave policy.

During sick leave relating to an employee's own condition, employers are obligated to pay employees the higher of their regular rate of pay or the applicable minimum wage. That amount is capped at \$511 per day and \$5,110 in the aggregate. For sick leave taken to care for a family member, the rate of pay is reduced to two-thirds of the employee's regular rate of pay. That amount is capped at \$200 per day and \$2,000 in the aggregate.

Employers must post in their workplaces a notice relating to the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (the DOL is required to publish a model notice within seven days).

To help employers shoulder the financial burden, employers can claim a tax credit equal to 100% of qualified sick leave wages paid to employees. These credits, however, are limited to \$200 or \$511 per day, depending on the qualifying leave event. Employers can claim a full credit for employees earning up to \$132,860 in income and a partial credit for higher earners.

The Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act:

This provision modifies the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) by expanding the circumstances under which an employee is entitled to take leave. Specifically, employees can take FMLA-protected leave if they have a "qualifying need," which means the employee is unable to work or telework due to a need to care for their child (age 18 or younger) if the child's school or daycare has closed because of a public health emergency (defined as a COVID-19 emergency declared by a federal, state or local authority). The first 10 days of this expanded FMLA leave is unpaid, although the employee may utilize accrued vacation, PTO or sick leave during that time (in accordance with the employer's leave policy). During the first 10 days, the employee may also qualify for paid leave under the above Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (which would overlap), in certain circumstances. For each day of FMLA leave taken thereafter, employers are obligated to pay employees at the rate of two-thirds of the employee's regular pay rate. The amount of paid leave is capped at \$200 per day and \$10,000 in the aggregate.

Importantly, all employers with fewer than 500 employees must comply with the expanded leave entitlements (a change to the 50-employee threshold that currently applies under FMLA). That said, the law gives the DOL authority to exempt employers with fewer than 50 employees if the paid FMLA provisions would jeopardize the viability of the business. Also, while not directly addressed in the new law, it appears that the general FMLA rules for counting employees would apply; if separate business entities (separate EINs or business lines) have different management and separate operations, then the entity would count employees separately from the bigger controlled group of entities — employers should work with counsel to be sure. Additionally, any employee who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days would be eligible for the expanded leave (but there are exceptions

for employers that are experiencing economic hardship and employ fewer than 25 employees — we assume the DOL will further clarify that via regulations). Finally, the job protection requirements of the FMLA would also apply to COVID-19-related leaves (meaning employers must reinstate employees after their FMLA period ends), although there are some exceptions for employers with fewer than 25 employees.

To help with the expanded FMLA-related tax burden, employers may claim a tax credit of 100% of qualified FMLA wages paid to employees, capped at \$200 per day and \$10,000 per quarter per employee.

Mandated COVID-19 Coverage for Employer-Sponsored Group Health Plans:

Under this provision, group health plans of any size (insured and self-insured, including grandfathered plans) and health insurers in the group and individual market are required to cover COVID-19 tests and related services without cost sharing or prior authorization requirements. Excepted benefits and retiree-only plans are exempt. (Separately, most states have published guidance that requires COVID-19 coverage without cost sharing as well, which would apply to fully insured plans in each state.) Employers should work with their carriers and plan administrators to ensure COVID-19 coverage is provided.

The tests and services include in vitro diagnostic tests (cleared by the FDA) and items and services furnished during an in-office visit, urgent care visit or emergency room visit that result in an order for an in vitro diagnostic test. Thus, an individual visiting an ER who is given several lab tests, an MRI and a chest x-ray may be swept into this "no cost" requirement as there is no qualifier that the other items and services relate to the relevant evaluation.

As these issues are rapidly developing, NFP Benefits Compliance will continue to monitor developments on this new legislation, including any additional guidance issued by the DOL or other regulatory agency. In the meantime, please reach out to your NFP advisor with any questions.

Oil 'n Gas Complaints

With the increase of oil and gas drilling activities in and around Blanchard, comes an increase in complaints of trucks, noise and odor.

All drilling activities complaints are to be reported directly to the Oklahoma Corporation Commission at 580-255-0103 (Duncan Field Ofc) or <http://www.occeweb.com/AspxForms/OGComplaintForm.aspx>.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled in November 2018 in Case No. 117,303, Oklahoma Oil & Gas Association (Petitioner) v. The Kingfisher County Commissioners, (Respondents), that clarified "Further, a legal challenge to the reasonableness of a rule or regulation imposed by a municipality, county or other political subdivision concerning road use, traffic, noise and odors incidental to oil and gas operations within their boundaries shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, 52 O.S. Supp. 2015, §137.1."

Trucking complaints (speeding, signs, etc) are to be filed with the Blanchard Police Department at 405-485-9392.

Oil 'n Gas Permits

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) reported NO permits for oil and gas drilling were issued within the City limits of Blanchard this week.

The OCC is the only state agency that issues permits for oil and gas drilling.

Police Blotter

NO jail activity for this week.



Public Hearing

The scheduled Public Hearing on the denial of an application from John Jondahl of 7204 N. Council Avenue for a "Conditional Use" to allow a Medical Marijuana Growing has been postponed due to the State of Emergency.



SBA Loan Info

Blanchard Businesses Now Eligible to Apply for SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans

Blanchard businesses affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) are now eligible to apply for the SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan. The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to Oklahoma small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of COVID-19.

Businesses can find the form and eligibility information at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>

The funding for the loans will be provided by the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act that was recently signed by President Trump.

To qualify for the program, the state must submit documentation of business losses for at least five (5) businesses per county.

If approved, an SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance declaration will make disaster loans of up to \$2 million available to small businesses and private, nonprofit organizations to help alleviate economic injury caused by COVID-19.

According to the SBA, these loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that cannot be paid because of the impact of COVID-19. The interest rate is 3.75% for small businesses without credit available elsewhere and 2.75% for nonprofits. Businesses with credit available elsewhere are not eligible for this program.

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce has developed a list of frequently asked questions available at <https://www.okcommerce.gov/sba-loan-application-and-faqs/>

Commerce also has staff available to assist small businesses with filling out the forms. Companies needing assistance with the application forms and economic development organizations providing assistance to businesses in their communities should contact Ray Little at ray.little@okcommerce.gov or 405-815-5227.

Senior Assistance

ASCOG gratefully received a check from the Masonic Charity Foundation for \$64,158 at the December meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Regional Councils (OARC). The funds will be used in 2020 to assist those in need who are at least 55 years old residing in ASCOG's 8-county region (Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Grady, Jefferson, McClain, Stephens, and Tillman). Typical types of assistance include funding of up to \$800 for ADA approved ramps, dental work including dentures, hearing aids, wheelchairs, scooters, lift chairs, durable medical equipment, minor home repairs, failing home appliances, heaters, air-conditioners. Vision services including glasses, utility assistance, and emergency medications are also available but at lower maximums. Applicants must submit a completed 2020 Masonic Grant application along with an approved vendor's estimate to be considered. Applications will be emailed to all city and county clerks where they can print a copy upon request. Printed versions will be available at the Senior Centers. Applications are also available on ASCOG's website www.ascog.org. Those with email capabilities can request an application be directly emailed to them by emailing ward_ro@ascog.org. Applications are not mailed out. Money that would be spent on postage, envelopes, printing, and labor are reserved for actual assistance as listed above.

Senior Dining Program



The Blanchard Senior Nutrition Center is CLOSED to the general public but we will still prepare meals for home delivery ONLY to our citizens.

If you are 60 or older, you are eligible to participate free of charge. However, a suggested donation of \$2.00 is requested. Citizens under the age of 60 may participate but are required to pay \$5.00 for the meal.

Please call 485-9260, if you would like to be considered for a home delivered meal. Please be advised, the home delivery will begin the next business day.

Shelter Registration

The Blanchard Emergency Management would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that severe storm season is fast approaching. We want to express how important it is for everyone to register their home's storm shelters and safe rooms.



The City of Blanchard storm shelter registry provides emergency services with information that allows them to locate citizens after a tornado or other natural disaster. Registration helps ensure that people in shelters affected by the storm are able to get help quickly with the potential of shelters' exits being blocked due to debris or structural damage. Registration is doubly important with the possibility of shelters flooding due to broken water lines or simply rain waters entering the shelter and drowning people trapped inside. Registration forms include your address, list of persons who would normally be present at the home and could potentially be in the shelter, the location of the shelter/safe room on the property, and contact information for yourself and an emergency contact. If you have previously registered and some part of your information has changed, feel free to submit an updated form. If you have a question as to if your shelter is registered please contact the Emergency Management Director/Fire Chief Charlie Largent at the Blanchard Fire Department at 405.485.3939.

Registration forms available at Blanchard City Hall. Please return all registrations to the Blanchard City Hall, 122 North Main Street, Blanchard, OK 73010.

Special and Urgent Notice

LIMITING IN-PERSON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT CITY OF BLANCHARD COUNCIL MEETINGS

These are unprecedented times. The President of the United States, the Governor of Oklahoma and the Mayor of Blanchard have declared a State of Emergencies as a result of the threat of COVID-19 (aka the "Coronavirus"). The Governor and the Mayor both direct citizens to follow public health directives including canceling all gatherings of ten (10) people or more. The Oklahoma Legislature passed and the Governor signed Senate Bill 661 regarding teleconferencing and videoconferencing requirements and allows local legislative bodies to hold their meetings without complying with the normal requirements of in-person public participation.

The health and well-being of our residents is the top priority for the City of

Blanchard and you are urged to take all appropriate health safety precautions. To that end, **ON A TEMPORARY BASIS and UNTIL FURTHER ORDER OF THE MAYOR, only members of the governing body and essential staff will be allowed into the Council Chambers during the Blanchard Council meetings. Also, UNTIL FURTHER ORDER OF THE MAYOR, members of the public will not be allowed into the Council Chambers during the Blanchard Council meetings.**

To facilitate public participation and observation however, our Blanchard City Council meetings will be available by:

- Livestream on the City's Facebook page via the website at <http://www.cityofblanchard.us>.
- A full recording of the Meeting will also be available through a link that will be placed on the City's website.

Any members of the public wishing to provide public comment for the items on the agenda may do so by 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24th as follows:

1. **Email:** You can email your NAME and ADDRESS and comments to cityclerk@cityofblanchard.us before the meeting. Please identify the Agenda item you wish to address in your comments. Your comments will be read into the record.
2. **Telephone:** You can record your NAME and ADDRESS and comments at (405) 485-9392 x 106 before the meeting. Please identify the Agenda item you wish to address in your comments. Your comments will be read into the record.
3. **Box outside of City Hall:** You can provide your NAME and ADDRESS and any hand-written comments by dropping off a note at the box located in front of City Hall (122 North Main Street) before the meeting. Please identify the Agenda item you wish to address in your comments. Your comments will be read into the record.

BY ORDER OF THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF BLANCHARD, OKLAHOMA, THIS 20th DAY OF MARCH, 2020.

Think, Shop, Live Blanchard!

Please keep in mind that Blanchard's quality of life and local economy rely on where residents spend their money and do their shopping. Sales tax is a direct and vital lifeline to essential services like public safety (Police, Fire, 911 services), public facilities, projects, programs and services. Shopping locally keeps businesses here in Blanchard, providing jobs and benefiting community schools and non-profits. If there's one thing we can all do to make our dollars work for this community, it's to shop local! Grab dinner in Blanchard on your way home. You'd be surprised what a difference that can make. Shopping locally benefits the entire community. Make your tax dollars work for you and your community.

Trash Service

The City contracts with Waste Connections for solid waste collection and disposal of residential trash. For a smooth operation, the following rules should be adhered to:

- ✓ Cans need to be set out by 7am;
- ✓ Carts need to be by the road, at the edge of the driveways, not in the driveway;
- ✓ If you have multiple carts they need to be 3 feet apart;
- ✓ Carts need to be 5 to 7 feet from mailbox, cars, etc;
- ✓ If carts are placed with wheels toward the house they are less likely to blow over;
- ✓ No bungee cords, straps, or rope to be placed on your cart, if it is windy, you can place a rock or brick on the lid to keep it closed;
- ✓ No limbs or trees or hazardous materials in either polycart.

2020 Census - Be Counted!



The 2020 Census is rapidly approaching. Your participation in the census, and a full and accurate count, is very important to our local community.

First, the census is the basis for equal political representation under the Constitution. Second, State and Federal tax dollars are allotted based on the number of people counted in the census. **BE COUNTED!** It's easy! It's safe! It's important! For the first time ever, the Census Bureau will accept responses on-line, but you can still respond by phone or mail.

You may be contacted by phone or in person, please remember that anyone with the Census will **NOT** ask for your social security number, banking information, money donations, or political parties. If anyone contacts you claiming to be with the Census and asks for any of this information, it is scam! You need to contact the police department immediately. **DO NOT** give out your personal/financial information.
