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Times photo by Bob Burns

Turkey Trot

Runners for the Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot make their way from the starting gate toward Saguaro Blvd. The annual event was modified due to COVID-19 safety precautions, including the removal of timed competition, face coverings at the staging area and staggered starts to help provide more spacing between participants. For more photos, see page 12A.

Local COVID-19 cases mirror national trend

By Ryan Winslett
Times Editor

National COVID-19 cases are trending up, a situation that has been mirrored locally for both Maricopa County and Fountain Hills. *The Times* began tracking local numbers in late July, with the biggest gains in Maricopa County (15,771 new cases in one week) and Fountain Hills (46 new cases in one week) being reported on Nov. 25.

On a national level, the United States saw a bump in COVID-19 cases and deaths in July and has been on a continuous climb since September. Again, this same trend has been seen on the local level.

On Nov. 25, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that 12.3 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported in the United States with just over 257,000 deaths. Of those national cases, 302,324 were reported in Arizona and, according to the Arizona Department of Health Services, 196,849 were reported in Maricopa County alone. The second largest number of reported cases in Arizona is Pima County with 37,518, followed by Yuma County with 17,119 and Pinal County with 15,707.

These types of numbers

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Council approves new fee schedule

By Bob Burns
Times Reporter

The Town Council voted unanimously at its Nov. 17 regular session to adopt a new comprehensive user fee schedule applied to town services.

Finance Director David Pock explained in his staff report that user fees are used by local government for products, services and rentals provided to individuals or groups for their benefit.

"These fees rarely cover the entire cost incurred by the local government to obtain, maintain and provide the products, services and assets for rental," Pock said.

Unrecovered costs are subsidized from other funding sources, most notably the General Fund.

Earlier this year the town obtained the services of Willdan Financial Services and Pat Walker Consulting to conduct the first User Fee Study for

the town since incorporation.

The study calculated full cost, including indirect costs, for each fee included in the 2020 Comprehensive User Fee Schedule. This calculation was compared to existing fees to determine the amount of subsidy.

"Based on that information, and multiple discussions with staff, (a) draft report was compiled, including proposed revisions to the fee schedule," Pock

said.

The recommended fees provided a mix of both increases and reductions to existing fees.

Pock said user fees account for approximately \$1.3 million of the town's annual revenue, or about 7 percent.

The town's Comprehensive Fee Schedule is posted to the town website, fh.az.gov, with financial documents. The new schedule will be effective July 1, 2021.



The pumps for the fountain were evaluated as part of the study by Black and Veatch. Check valves on the pumps are currently being replaced.

Study shows Fountain is in decent shape

By Bob Burns
Times Reporter

With the town's iconic Fountain approaching its 50th birthday, it was time for a comprehensive check-up. With the physical conducted earlier this year, the evaluation found the system is in pretty good shape.

The Town Council approved a contract with Black and Veatch Engineering to conduct the analysis of the Fountain, lake and associated operating systems. The work began in May and continued through much of the summer, with a report and recommendations presented to the council in October.

Perhaps the best news from the study is that there is no indication that the liner for the lake is leaking or breached in any manner. Replacement of the liner, last done around 2000, is an expensive and disruptive project.

Black and Veatch's ex-

amination included divers conducting visual inspections along the perimeter, where the liner is connected to the concrete shoreline, and numerous measurements of sediment accumulation where they found at most about one foot of depth. There was also a 10-day evaporation test conducted to measure whether any leakage could be detected. They concluded that the liner is in good condition, with no indication of leakage.

They do, however, recommend continued long-range planning related to both financing and execution of a liner replacement.

The next phase of the assessment would identify the process for removal and replacement of the lake liner, which must include options for water drainage, sediment removal, wildlife remediation, environment impacts and other tasks. Staff expects to be able to

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Stroll in the Glow Saturday

The annual Stroll in the Glow holiday celebration will return to Fountain Hills this Saturday, Dec. 5, with organizers highlighting some fun new additions.

A local holiday tradition, the Stroll in the Glow will feature many festive aspects for attendees to

enjoy. Many of the usual parts of the Stroll will return, such as Mayor Ginny Dickey leading the ceremonial countdown to turn on the holiday lights for the first time. Once the switch flips, thousands of twinkling lights illuminate the Avenue of the Fountains.

Additionally, local music groups set up at the Stroll and play festive tunes for attendees to enjoy as they walk the Avenue and see the light displays. Children will be able to write their letters to Santa Claus and drop them off at the Neighborhood Property Owners Association's "Letters to Santa" mailbox, just in time for him to check his list twice for Christmas.

One of the most anticipated parts of the Stroll in the Glow is when Santa himself arrives to Fountain Hills on a fire engine, ready to greet the children. This year, children will be able to take a photo with Santa Claus (with COVID-19 safety precautions). A professional photographer will be available, and all photos will be posted online for parents/families to download for free.

New to the Stroll this year is "Tuba Christmas," which is a world-wide tradition that will bring 50 tuba players to the intersection of Verde River and the Avenue of the Fountains. The tubas will be decorated in festive garb and holiday gear as they play carols and other fun tunes for attendees. Another addition to the Stroll in the Glow is the brand new "Holiday Stroll Window Painting Contest." Local businesses

and organizations are invited to register for this competition and are invited to paint their assigned window however they would like. Attendees at the Stroll in the Glow are able to vote in person for who they want to win the contest, and the winner will receive a cash prize.

COVID-19 protocols, such as mandatory mask wearing, cancellation of the Chill in the Hills skating rink, cancellation of business "tabling," and more, will be in effect. Anyone who would like to participate in the Holiday Stroll Window Painting Contest should visit fhchamber.com.



New health precautions will be in place, but the Stroll in the Glow event will take place in downtown Fountain Hills on Dec. 5.

INSIDE

Sports:

Unique season winds down.
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Forum:

Coalition hosts public talk on opioids.
See Page 11A

Study:

Council talks local traffic.
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COVID-19 update

Reported Cases*
As of Tuesday, Dec. 1

Maricopa County Totals: 213,121

Fountain Hills Totals: 461

*Source: Arizona Department of Health Services

WEATHER

	H	L	P
Tues., Nov. 24	69	42	--
Wed., Nov. 25	70	51	--
Thurs., Nov. 26	69	40	--
Fri., Nov. 27	63	42	--
Sat., Nov. 28	69	47	--
Sun., Nov. 29	73	50	--
Mon., Nov. 30	70	47	--

For weather updates and forecasts go to www.fhtimes.com

