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## County hearings will cover fees

### Proposed hikes for water connection, airport costs

**Julie E. Greene**  
The Herald-Mail  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Washington County is holding public hearings Tuesday morning, April 28, about proposed hikes for water and

sewer connection fees and Hagerstown Regional Airport fees.

The county is not proposing increasing landfill fees for the upcoming fiscal year, which starts July 1, according to an email from Chief Financial Officer Kellee Mace.

County water and sewer rates will be going up, though those increases were approved two years ago as part of a multiyear rate plan, Mace said.

The hearing for the proposed rate changes for the Hagerstown

Regional Airport is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 28, in the County Commissioners' meeting room at 100 W. Washington St. in downtown Hagerstown, according to a notice of public hearing published in The Herald-Mail.

The hearing for the proposed changes related to water and sewer connection fees is scheduled for 9:45 a.m. Tuesday.

The county recently announced that those who want to speak at Washington

County Board of County Commissioners public hearings need to register in advance. The deadline to register to speak at both hearings is noon on Monday, April 27, according to the hearing notices.

The hearing notices did not include an email for written comments. The email to reach the county commissioners is [ContactCommissioners@washco-md.net](mailto:ContactCommissioners@washco-md.net).

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An Israeli armored vehicle drives in Lebanon, as seen from the Israeli side of the border on April 24. FLORION GOGA/REUTERS

## Lebanon ceasefire extended by 3 weeks

### Blockade on shipping 'ironclad,' Hegseth says

**Bart Jansen and Francesca Chambers**  
USA TODAY

Israel and Lebanon extended their ceasefire by three weeks, President Donald Trump announced, though reports of salvos continued between Israel and Hezbollah, Iran's ally in Lebanon.

Also continuing was Trump's blockade against commercial shipping to Iran's ports, and the near-shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz, despite the Iran-U.S. ceasefire that began April 8.

The lack of traffic through the strait has caused international consternation.

Still, at a morning news conference April 24, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth called the U.S. blockade of Iran's ports "ironclad" and said Iran acts like "a gang of pirates" to seize ships from other countries.

"We are in control. Nothing in, nothing out," Hegseth said of shipping with Iranian ports. "A blockade for as long as

it takes."

Iran seized two container ships earlier in the week. Hegseth said the seizures happened with small speedboats armed with AK-47s, and he criticized Iran's military, the Revolutionary Guard.

"Iran's battered military, the IRGC specifically, has been reduced to a gang of pirates with a flag," Hegseth said. "They don't control anything. They're acting like pirates, acting like terrorists."

Hegseth took another slap at U.S. allies who have refused to help police the critical shipping lane, calling European and Asian nations "free riders."

"We're not counting on Europe, but they need the Strait of Hormuz much more than we do and might want to start doing less talking and having less fancy conferences in Europe and get in a boat," Hegseth said, referring to the multinational planning conferences that have been led by the United Kingdom and France on reopening the strait. "This is much more their fight than ours."

Hegseth also defended the United States against criticism from Pope Leo XIV and others that the fighting doesn't



At a news conference April 24, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said Iran acts like "a gang of pirates" seizing ships from other countries. KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

comply with the doctrine for a "just" war.

"The pope's going to do his thing. That's fine," Hegseth told reporters at the Pentagon. "We know what our

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## Journalists urge protest of Trump at press dinner

**Kathryn Palmer**  
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump is expected to attend The White House Correspondents' Dinner on April 25 for the first time as commander in chief, prompting backlash from more than 200 journalists, journalism organizations and press freedom groups.

In an open letter, the coalition urged the event's organizer, the White House Correspondents' Association, to use the dinner to defend press freedom amid ongoing threats to the First Amendment, many of which have been spearheaded by the administration. While some attendees have pledged to wear pins on their gowns and lapels in subtle protest, the group of journalists is urging the association to go a step further and directly condemn the president for dozens of actions they say are intended to undermine the nation's press freedoms.

"We, the undersigned, call upon the White House Correspondents' Association to use the occasion of the White House Correspondents' Dinner to forcefully demonstrate opposition to President Trump's efforts to trample freedom of the press," the April 20 letter said.

"Speak forcefully," the letter says, "in front of the man who seeks to undermine our country's long tradition of an independent, strong, and free press."

Signatories include some of the nation's largest journalism and press freedom organizations, including the Society of Professional Journalists, the Freedom of the Press Foundation, the National Association of Black Journalists and the Coalition for Women in Journalism. Several prominent journalists also signed the letter, among them former "Today" show co-host Ann Curry and longtime CBS News anchor Dan Rather.

"There is a long tradition of presidents attending the White House Correspondents Association Dinner," the letter said. "But these are not normal times, and this cannot be business as usual with the press standing up to applaud the man who attacks them on a daily basis."

The group urged the White House Correspondents' Association, which has hosted the Washington, DC, event

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