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Fines not slowing down for Hub City in absence of waste water solution



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The city is being fined for not meeting deadlines under the agreed order with MDEQ.

Those deadlines range from lagoon expansion to sludge removal to submission of plans for a waste water treatment method.

This came upon the city several years ago when the Environmental Protection Agency, along with MDEQ and the Gulf Restoration Network told the city to find a treatment and disposal method that did not involve dumping the current waste water into the Leaf River.

And years later, the city still does not have a solution.

It is on a dual track to select a method, which will likely be either land application or mechanical methods.

The city council moved along with the dual track after authorizing the mayor to terminate a contract with Groundworx, which was the company working with Hattiesburg to build and service a land application system.

"When we opted to pursue the mechanical treatment as our solution, we knew we would be nowhere near meeting that deadline and truthfully, any of the deadlines," City Council President Kim Bradley said.

Bradley was referring to a Sept. 1, 2015, deadline to submit design plans for the waste water system.

The city missed that deadline, and it has built up \$90,000 in fines since then and will continue to be fined \$1,500 each day by MDEQ until they submit a design.

Engineers with Neel-Schaeffer have said that design is ready for land application, but since the city has not chosen which method to use, the deadlines are being missed. However, if Bradley is correct in his predictions, that may be settled sooner than later.

"In the next 10 to 14 days, a solution will be made or will be chosen, and things are going to go very fast," Bradley said.

If this issue is brought up for a vote, it is expected that land application will get approved by a 4-1 vote, with Ward 2 Councilwoman Deborah Delgado as the lone nay. The city council meets on Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 5 p.m., with a work session and agenda setting on Monday, Dec. 7 at 4 p.m.

The next deadlines under the agreement are May 1, 2016, which is when the city should already have construction under way on a treatment facility, and May 1, 2018 for construction completion.

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