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Sewer rate vote squelched

Delgado's return nixes veto override

Mar. 11, 2014 | 6 Comments

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Written by **Tim Doherty**
American Staff Writer

It is said that the Lord works in mysterious ways.

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On Monday evening, that appeared to apply even to Hattiesburg sewer rates.

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A medical emergency that delayed the beginning of a special meeting called by the City Council allowed for the arrival of Ward 2 Councilwoman Deborah Delgado.

And Delgado's arrival made moot the second of two agenda items, which asked for a vote by Council on a resolution to override a veto of an amended ordinance that would have raised sewer rates to pay for

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tion of mandated wastewater treatment plant.
majority vote to override Mayor Johnny
amendment that would have raised sewer rates
April and continuing annually for the next three

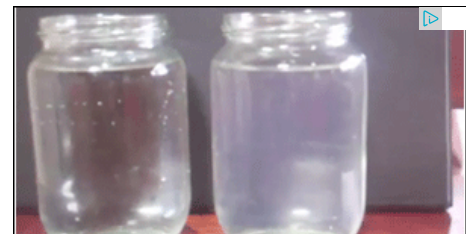
Instead, following an executive session to hear about a lawsuit against the city related to its current wastewater system, the second item never was motioned and the meeting was closed.

"No point," City Council President Kim Bradley said. "We didn't have the votes."

The city is under a timeline delineated by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality to create a wastewater system that will stop polluted discharge from entering the Leaf River.

In January, Council voted 4-1 to contract for 30 years with Hattiesburg-based Groundworx LLC, to create and operate a land-application wastewater treatment system. The contract calls for Groundworx to issue bonds to build the system that is expected to cost an initial \$142 million.

Council voted 3-2 in February to amend an ordinance that would



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mean steep sewage rate hikes.

The higher rates would allow the city to immediately meet bond obligations, whittling down the amount of interest paid over the life of the bonds.

Bradley, Ward 3 Councilman Carter Carroll and Ward 4 Councilwoman Mary Dryden voted for the amended ordinance; Delgado and Ward 5 Councilman Henry Naylor voted against it.

With Delgado attending the National League of Cities meeting in Washington, D.C., a 3-1 council vote would have reinstated the hikes.

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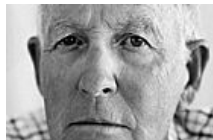
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