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## City Council approves lagoon contracts

Haskel Burns , American Staff Writer 7:44 p.m. CDT October 18, 2016



(Photo: Haskel Burns/Hattiesburg American)

Although the solution to Hattiesburg's wastewater treatment problems is far from a done deal, city leaders are perhaps one step closer to utilizing the lagoons as a sole treatment method, rather than having to build a new system.

That move came during Tuesday's Hattiesburg City Council meeting, when council members voted 4-0 to approve two contracts regarding management at the lagoons: one with L&A Contracting of Hattiesburg and another with APG-Neuros from Canada. Ward 1 Councilman Kim Bradley did not attend the meeting.

"The (original) plan was to have a new (wastewater treatment) facility up and running by September 2018," Mayor Johnny DuPree said. "Well, we couldn't meet that deadline if we started today — there's just no way to

do that.

"So our goal in the immediate future — today — is to make sure that the lagoons are operating as efficiently as they can. And so that's why we've done (these contracts)."

Under the first contract, L&A Contracting will take over entire management of the lagoons and will be in charge of cleaning, aeration, blowers and the diffusion system. Under the contract, the company would enter into a 12-month agreement, with payment not to exceed \$1.2 million.

Some of the rates the city would be billed for include \$55 per hour for a project manager with truck, \$35 per hour for skilled labor, \$28 per hour for labor and \$35 per hour for a small-tool package.

Under the second contract, APG-Neuros, based Canada, will assist with the south lagoon's blowers. The 12-month contract will cost the city \$30,375.



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(<http://www.hattiesburgamerican.com/story/news/local/hattiesburg/2016/10/17/hattiesburg-council-looks-lagoon-contracts/92234464/>)

In addition to approving those two contracts, city officials also recently approved Carey Hardin, engineer with Clearwater Consultants in Starkville, as consultant for the lagoons. The city contracted with engineer Steve Mitchell, who will assist L&A Contracting with properly cleaning the diffusion system in an attempt to get 100 percent of the system working.

Rod Dickerson, engineer with Dickerson Consultants in Homer, Louisiana, has been authorized to test a patent-pending microbiological technology on the lagoons.

In early August, council members voted to go ahead with a \$135 million mechanical treatment plant after tossing aside plans for a land application system to fix the city's wastewater woes. The city already had faced two sets of \$1,500-per-day fines after missing a court-ordered deadline to have design plans for a new system finalized and submitted to not only the appropriate state and federal agencies for approval, but also to the U.S. District Court that is overseeing a suit brought by Gulf Restoration Network.

"If we had not been cited by the (Environmental Protection Agency) and GRN to make some adjustments to our lagoons, we wouldn't have had to go through that long, drawn-out process of getting back to actually where we are now," DuPree said. "I mean, I'm good with where we are now, because the lagoons are functioning. We want to make sure the lagoons continue to function, so we don't have to shackle the ratepayers with an exorbitant fee for a new system."



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At a recent meeting with MDEQ and Gulf Restoration Network, a new timeline was agreed to, on the basis that the city's lagoons have mostly met permit limits for the last 12 months or so. That, in turn, gave city officials a chance to step back and look a little closer at the lagoons as a sole wastewater treatment system.

"This has been such a part of our life for so many years," DuPree said. "We'll be bringing other proposals to the council that will hopefully (allow) the lagoons to continue to run efficiently, and we'll see what happens down the line.

"We're in a position now to where we can feel pretty comfortable, hopefully, for the next few years, and we'll continue to focus on trying to make the lagoons be as efficient as they can. Of course, when we get our new nutrient criteria in two or three years, we'll know whether we can actually reach those nutrient levels. We're still negotiating with GRN ... so that we won't have to build a mechanical system at this point, since the lagoons are working properly."

In other action Tuesday:

Council members voted 4-0 to execute an LED lighting proposal with Mississippi Power Co. to upgrade lighting along the Longleaf Trace east of U.S. 49. The city will incur a one-time, up-front cost of \$48,453 and a monthly cost of \$2,484.

In addition, several awards and proclamations were given during the meeting:

- Hattiesburg was awarded the American Planning Association's Public Outreach Award.
- DuPree awarded the city's planning department with a proclamation.
- William Carey University was awarded with a proclamation for its 110th year of existence.
- Planned Parenthood was awarded with a proclamation for its 100th year of existence.

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