

### **Mayor, aldermen end on high note**

By Bonnie Bolden, Bastrop Daily Enterprise, Fri Jun 12, 2009, 06:00 AM CDT

Bastrop, La. - At the last meeting of the current mayor and board of alderpersons, the city agreed to execute a contract with Denmon Engineering for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The \$1.5 million in stimulus funds will be used to **replace ditch crossings and other sewer lines.**

Hawkins said state Senator Mike Walsworth and state Representative Sam Little were responsible for the city's receipt of the stimulus aid.

"We are, as I appreciate it, the only city in the state of Louisiana to get all of the money we asked for," Mayor Clarence Hawkins said. "This reduces us using our funds."

At the same meeting, the council amended the budget for this fiscal year to accurately reflect the city's revenues and expenditures.

"This is amending our existing budget to make our budget a reality," Hawkins said.

The aldermen also passed a proposed budget for the fiscal year that will start July 1, 2009 and end June 30, 2010. Mayor-Elect Betty Alford-Olive abstained from the vote.

To ensure the city has available money year round, the aldermen agreed to apply to the Louisiana State Bond Commission for an annual \$1.5 million loan that will be repaid with tax income within a year.

"Many local governments do this," said Bill Bowles, the city's bond attorney.

Bowles said the city may be able to secure the loan at a two percent interest rate this year.

The board also passed resolutions that adopt the current ad valorem millage rate for this year, 40.35, and will roll forward the rate to the maximum millage option from last year, 40.47.

In 2008, the board voted not to roll the millage forward to 40.47 which would have generated additional funds for the city. Rolling the millage back to 40.35 ensured the city would receive the same amount of money as previously collected but no more. The increase is expected to generate an additional \$9,275 for the city.

Morehouse Parish Tax Assessor John Hill advised the board that not rolling up would cause Bastrop to lose the higher rate if an early assessment year were declared.

Boo Robinson, District A, was the only alderman to oppose the increase.

The council members also amended the current budget of and approved a new budget for the coming year for Bastrop Sales Tax District No. 1, a sales tax district that finances street repairs and related improvements.

The city will also enter into an agreement with the State of Louisiana, Department of Economic Development to **construct an industrial park on U.S. Route 165 between Monroe and Bastrop.**

Morehouse Economic Development CEO Kay King said Bastrop sent in a pre-application for the project and was invited to send in an application. If the funds are received, the city would contribute \$130,000 and the state would contribute \$350,000 to fund the \$2,160,000 project. The additional funds would be supplied by the Economic Development Agency.

King said Kelsey Short, director of the Agriculture, Forest and Food Technology Division of the state Department of Economic Development, viewed the proposed site and encouraged the state's approval.

The city will enter an additional partnership with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Division of Aviation, **to rehabilitate the fueling system at Morehouse Memorial Airport**. The entire project will cost \$5,407; the city is asking for \$3,500 from the state and agreeing to finance the labor and \$500 in materials.

Brent Elton, the airport manager, explained that the fueling equipment has been shut down since last fall. Water or other contaminants may have entered the system. The LA DOTD funding would allow the tank to be emptied and cleaned and place barriers around the fueling system that would decrease the chance of a plane, or other vehicle, colliding into the fueling system.

Arthur Hamlin, District E, was the only alderman to oppose a state-mandated two percent raise to firefighters who have worked for the city for more than three but no more than 23 years. Robinson approved the measure "reluctantly" after noting both changes in the economy since the mandate and that the police department, and other city employees, did not receive "the same privilege."

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