



How City of Natchez Elected Officials Have Failed the Public: Garbage and Waste Management *A Basic Government Service*

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Generally.¹ The now infamous City of Natchez garbage collection contract debacle of 2017-2018 will hardly be forgotten for years to come. When the City decided to seek proposals and then never followed up on publishing a Request for Proposals (RFP), the alarm sounded for City businesses and residents. It was not until approximately one month before the existing contract expired that the City acknowledged it had failed to act and raced to place a band-aid on the problem it created. Result: Businesses and residents lost the convenience of curb service recycling and were offered the “opportunity” to haul their own recyclable items to the Convention Center bin downtown. Query whether this will interfere with garbage delivery from nearby business(es) to City dumpsters at the Convention Center?² During the months of waiting for details

of the City’s future waste management program, businesses and residents learned that curb service would most likely be reduced, causing alarm for all because of the potential rodent problem that would be created with food garbage held for days on end until picked up. The outcome resulted in 25%-40% increase in costs to businesses and residents plus a lot of questions about the process from all—businesses, residents, proposers. To make matters worse, the City failed to address staging and parking for the garbage trucks. In a last-minute effort, the City planned to send the garbage trucks through the residential area to the old Titan Tire facility when off-duty. While the City would have benefited with that parking plan because it would have had another reason to pay the exorbitant security it now pays for year-round

¹ City recycling pickup to be suspended? November 23, 2017 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2017/11/23/city-recycling-pickup-to-be-suspended/>; Once-a-week-pickup discussed at garbage forum December 20, 2017 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2017/12/20/once-a-week-pickup-discussed-at-garbage-forum/>; Aldermen seek proposals for new waste collection company March 13, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/03/13/aldermen-see-proposals-for-new-waste-collection-company/>; Trash pickup is serious business April 3, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/04/03/trash-pickup-is-serious-business/>; City votes to enter negotiations for new waste contract May 4, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/05/04/city-votes-to-enter-negotiations-for-new-waste-contract/>; Waste collection rate including \$4 increase approved by aldermen May 8, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/05/08/waste-collection-rate-including-4-increase-approved-by-aldermen/>; Leaders’ mistakes hit our wallets May 10, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/05/10/leaders-mistakes-hit-our-wallets/>

Waste proposals revealed May 12, 2018; <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/05/12/waste-proposals-revealed/>; Waste Pro letter questions bidding process May 18, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/05/18/waste-pro-letter-questions-bidding-process/>; Justice group works to fight for citizens’ rights, discusses complaint filed against City of Natchez May 25, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/05/25/justice-group-works-to-fight-for-citizens-rights-discusses-complaint-filed-against-city-of-natchez-bnx/>; Natchez taxpayers left in the dark over 25% increase in garbage contract: Ethics complaints <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2018/05/14/natchez-garbage-contract-stinks-ethics-complaint/606742002/>
² Persons say they witnessed private, nearby business(es) crossing Canal Street and dumping garbage into the City dumpsters located at the Convention Center.



security services at that facility,³ the public was outraged that the City would expose the nearby residents to garbage trucks traveling in and out of the residential area, and the City had to make other plans. Throughout the process, City elected officials appeared oblivious to the inconvenience they had thrust upon the taxpaying public with their ongoing incompetence, not to mention the other issues that, on information, popped up during the late planning—water leak(s) at the facility, need for porta-potties, running water to wash garbage trucks.

Ethics Violations. In the end, the City was slapped with an ethics violation and a ruling that the City had violated the Mississippi Open Meetings Law by meeting behind closed doors to discuss garbage contracts.⁴

³ It was never clear that the City or the garbage waste contractor would be responsible for security and related costs.

⁴<https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/08/05/ethics-report-finds-natchez-violated-open-meetings-act/>,

<https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2018/05/14/natchez-garbage-contract-stinks-ethics-complaint/606742002/>.

