



How Natchez Elected Officials Have Failed the Public: Public Properties—Part 1

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Public properties generally.¹ With the help of the Adams County Assessor's Office, OneBoard was able to determine there are 194 City properties. Prior to that, in its response to a public records request, the City could only find approximately 35+/- City properties.² The list produced by the City is the list of properties insured by Byrne Insurance Agency. Very few of those 194 properties have any government purpose. Many are in disrepair, should be surplus property and put in private hands on the tax rolls. Many of the properties are vacant lots which need to be transferred to neighboring property owners.

Millage. The City has failed to devote millage to public property maintenance and repair. City employees have described mold in City Hall and properties which need new roofs and other very costly repairs. See OneBoardnatchezadams.com

for the list of public properties OneBoard has been able to identify through official sources.

Titan Tire.³ The Natchez Democrat recently reported, "Natchez currently pays approximately \$85,000 a year to secure its building formerly operating as Titan Tire. Even though no business has occupied the facility for 17 years, city officials have said the security measures are a necessary caution to prevent intruders." This is a significant failure. Not only is the empty, most likely obsolete building an eyesore and hazard in that residential community, but also security is also costing the taxpayers \$85,000.00 per year with no return. One wonders just how many years of holding on to the Titan Tire property is enough? When will this end? Why is this not a priority? An entire generation has been subjected to living by this property that has yet to yield a positive for this community.

¹ Sunday focus: More than half of city-owned properties comprised of abandoned, vacant lots July 15, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/07/15/sunday-focus-more-than-half-of-city-owned-properties-comprised-of-abandoned-vacant-lots/>; City officials analyzing use, sale of its 215 properties June 23, 2013

<https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2013/06/23/city-officials-analyzing-use-sale-of-its-215-properties/>; City needs to sell off excess properties July 15, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/07/15/city-needs-to-sell-off-excess-properties/>

² The City produced a list of 35 +/- public properties as the complete listing, but that listing was a list of property insured by Byrne Insurance Agency.

³ Tire plant reunion to be Saturday March 18, 2011 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2011/03/18/tire-plant-reunion-to-be-saturday/>; City must turnover Titan facility to company for \$100 April 24, 2001 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2001/04/24/city-must-turnover-titan-facility-to-company-for-100/>; Sunday focus: More than half of city-owned properties comprised of

abandoned, vacant lots July 15, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/07/15/sunday-focus-more-than-half-of-city-owned-properties-comprised-of-abandoned-vacant-lots/>; Titan files no contest with OSHA January 18, 2000 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2000/01/18/titan-files-no-contest-with-osha/>; City should insist Titan clean up factory site July 21, 2015 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2015/07/21/city-should-insist-titan-clean-up-factory-site/>; Hard-to-believe issues in Natchez July 13, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/07/13/hard-to-believe-issues-in-natchez/>; City pays \$85,000 a year for Titan Tire security June 24, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/06/24/city-pays-85000-a-year-for-titan-tire-security/>; Arrow pulls out of Titan facility May 21, 2018 <https://www.natchezdemocrat.com/2018/05/21/arrow-pulls-out-of-titan-facility/>



Duncan Park. OneBoard has a separate heading for Duncan Park records and information. Duncan Park was gifted to the City (or its successor) with conditions that it is would revert to the Duncan heirs if used for any purpose other than the purpose stated in the donation. In pertinent part, the condition placed upon the donation that it “shall be forever maintained for the use and benefits of the public with the right of free ingress and egress, subject to such reasonable rules and regulations as the [City], or its successors may adopt and establish, and that it shall not be used for commercial purposes or for gain, but devoted to and usedly (sic) solely for and as an (sic) Memorial Park; and that should the [City], or its successors, at any time, in the future abandon the use of said property as a Memorial Park, or make anyuse (sic) of it not in keeping with the purpose with and for which this grant is made, the title hereby vested in [the City], shall cease and determine and revert to [the donors and heirs].”

- a. The golf course and its golf pro-shop management and operations are contracted out to a private source. The City is responsible for the facility maintenance; however, the City has failed to maintain that property, which can best be described as an eyesore.
- b. The Auburn Antebellum Home is managed by a group of dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to collect monies through events and tours to support repairs and provide match monies for grants. Historically, volunteers at Auburn Antebellum Home must watch carefully to be certain that the City does not budget the monies they have collected for special, unnecessary projects. The City does not have sufficient monies to keep this property up.
- c. The tennis courts are managed and operated by a City employee who receives

- a salary and is permitted to keep all monies from private tennis lessons, paying no rental fee for use of the court when providing private tennis lessons.
- d. The tennis pro-shop, which is about 2 years old, had a secure point-of-sale system which was set up by the YMCA. On information, City employees refused to use the secure system and the City did not force compliance for accountability. Rather, the City permitted the antiquated “cigar box” process of collecting entry fees for sports events and sales of merchandise to continue.
- e. The City has allowed buildings and fixtures at Duncan Park to deteriorate and has failed to take down or repair eyesores. Examples include the old swimming pool, the locomotive, the Pool Hall next to Auburn Antebellum Home, the children’s park grounds, and the baseball fields.
- f. Pictures taken recently can be found on the OneBoard website under the topic, Duncan Park, at www.oneboardnatchezadams.com.
- g. The City wasted time considering a 50-year (yes) lease to private citizens for the old, dilapidated and dangerous Club House near the Duncan Avenue entrance. The City’s lack of attention to the donation deeds jeopardizes the Duncan Park gift to the community, potentially causing the donation to revert to the Duncan heirs.
- h. Millage should be set aside for Duncan Park.

Tax Rolls. The City should divest itself of all properties that have no government purpose, placing covenants on those properties so they are placed on the tax rolls when title transferred.

Cemetery. Routine complaints continue about cemetery plot deeds. City funding for upkeep and maintenance is insufficient with the City pushing its obligations onto dedicated volunteers with the



Cemetery Director doing the best he can with limited funding from the City. On information, inmate assistance has been declined.

Fire. See discussion in “How Natchez Elected Officials Have Failed the Public: Fire Protection is a Basic Government Service.”

Litigation. City elected officials force the public to call the City out over and over again for its failures to follow the law where public property is concerned. Examples include proposed Natchez Bluff projects which ignore the centuries-old Congressional Act to preserve forever the bluff as a public ground, the take-down of the old Pecan Factory, the efforts to hand off the Old General Hospital, and The Depot. Google searches will quickly yield multiple articles and legal cases describing these and many other issues.

