

# Legislature to mull over 1 percent Hub City sales tax

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(Photo: File photo/Hattiesburg American)

The [Mississippi Legislature](#) will consider a 1 percent sales tax to help the Hub City with a variety of projects.

The decision to make the request of the Legislature was made via a 4-1 vote at Tuesday's Hattiesburg City Council meeting, with Ward 4 Councilwoman Mary Dryden providing the sole vote against the measure.

If the Legislature approves the request, a special election must be held wherein 60 percent of the qualified electors of the city must vote in favor of the move for it to be enacted.

If implemented, the funds paid to the city would be deposited into a special fund in the city treasury and would be used by city officials to help pay for establishing and repairing sanitary, storm, drainage or sewerage systems; protecting the city, its streets and sidewalks from overflow; constructing, improving or paving streets, sidewalks, driveways, parkways, walkways or public parking facilities or public facilities; constructing bridges and culverts; and altering or changing the channels of streams and water courses.

"We have an opportunity to try — and it's still a long shot — but to try to get some relief for the city from people that do not live in the city, but they do spend money in town, and sales tax," Ward 1 Councilman Kim Bradley said. "But we still have got a big deficit for funds to repair our infrastructure.

"The roads, we just don't have enough money to maintain a program that is going to correct the problem."

[City eyes 1 percent sales tax](#)

(<http://www.hattiesburgamerican.com/story/news/local/hattiesburg/2017/02/06/city-eyes-1-percent-sales-tax/97465568/>)

Council President Carter Carroll agreed the tax could help out with Hattiesburg's well-traveled streets.

"We're a city of 46,000 people, and on any given work day we can have as many as 100,000 to 150,000 people coming in," he said. "On a weekend, we can have 200,000 to 250,000, so we have a lot of people coming in each day and helping to make our streets a little bit weary.

"So it's not fair to ask the residents of Hattiesburg to pay for the roads that others are helping to tear up."

Dryden said she voted against the measure because the language in the proposal doesn't provide funds to repair water lines in the city. Those repairs, she said, are badly needed in places like Parkhaven neighborhood, where residents have reported intermittent discolored water for months.

"Other neighborhoods report similar issues, including the Crestview Drive/Terraces area, The Oaks, Audubon Westwood, Longleaf Heights, neighborhoods around Hattiesburg High School and those on Main Street," she said. "The Arcadia-Sunset neighborhood has been plagued with leaking water lines, which result in potholes for many years, because the lines are too small.

"So I'm requesting on behalf of our citizens that replacement of water lines be included in (the proposal)."

Carroll said the city has tried similar measures before, but the Legislature told city officials to narrow down the scope of the projects.

"So we'll send this to the Legislature and hope that it will be passed," Carroll said. "Then if it is, we will come back for a vote for a referendum for the citizens, and it would take a 60 percent vote (to pass)."

## Wastewater lagoon

Council also voted Tuesday to approve funding for an eight-week sampling program for the city's south wastewater lagoon at a cost of \$20,400.

Sampling, which will be handled by Bonner Analytical Testing Company in Hattiesburg, will be conducted at 11 locations throughout the lagoon system. Four of the locations are the influent points to the system: Petal influent, East Laurel Pump Station, Burkett's Creek Pump Station and the USA Yeast influent.

The remaining seven locations will be monitored by grab samples and represent the effluent from each individual cell in the pretreatment and final treatment facility.

"Right now, our lagoons are getting in better shape," Carroll said. "This data, what it's going to do ... is tell (engineer) Carey Hardin where we can best put our aerators. So once we do that, and we're getting more efficiency, we can cut down on the power and save a lot of money.

"We already are at about a 20 percent power savings right now, and producing cleaner water. So once we have that, we'll also be keeping up with the solids, and it's going to help us keep our lagoons in good shape."

The data also will be presented to Judge Keith Starrett when Hattiesburg officials head to federal court to ask the judge to change the terms of a consent judgment related to wastewater treatment issues brought forth in a 2012 lawsuit filed by Gulf Restoration Network.

Hattiesburg to challenge GRN consent judgment in court

(<http://www.hattiesburgamerican.com/story/news/local/hattiesburg/2016/11/22/hattiesburg-challenge-grn-consent-judgment-court/94218534/>)

Jackson attorney Keith Turner, who is representing Hattiesburg in the matter, said GRN's judgment basically seeks to force Hattiesburg to build a \$130 million mechanical plant to treat its wastewater — a venture that might not be necessary, given that the city's lagoons have been meeting current levels on a permit issued by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

"Over the past several months, the city has shifted its direction in trying to have the lagoons continue to operate to save dollars — to be able to continue with that system without having to spend (unneeded money) on alternatives," Turner said in an earlier story. "As part of that, there's a consent judgment from the federal court that is controlling what the city does.

"We have attempted to go back to GRN and renegotiate that with them ... to whatever the MDEQ requires of us, whatever legal requirements would satisfy them. Unfortunately, GRN is uncooperative and didn't want to negotiate those terms — they wanted to leave it as it was. So our goal now will be to go back to court and ask the court to consider the facts and circumstances on why the current consent judgment needs to be modified or withdrawn."

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