



# THE WEST SIDE Journal



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\$1.00

VOLUME 84 | NUMBER 42

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021

PORT ALLEN, LOUISIANA

## Port Allen's proposed budget includes nearly \$500,000 in wastewater treatment plant improvements

STAFF REPORT  
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The budget for the fiscal year 2021-22 proposed by Port Allen Mayor Richard Lee, III includes roughly \$480,000 in repairs to the city's wastewater treatment facility. City Engineer Tony Arikol urged the City Council to make those repairs as soon as possible to keep the 60-year-old system operating. The aging system is in desperate need of repair, Arikol told city officials at the April meeting.

"Let's just say this one is in the top 10% of needing tender loving care," he said.

The \$480,000 will cover repairs to and the replacement of several pumps, motors, a new polymer system and five blowers with effluent pumps as the most critical item on the list. Bodies on some of the pumps at the facility are approximately 40 years old and more prone to failure. During emergencies, repairs are much more costly. Recently, the city had to make an emergency repair to an effluent pump, which cost the city "much more than you deserve," Arikol said.

City officials are hopeful that Grön Fuels will commit to locating at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge. The company has expressed interest in building a regional wastewater treatment facility and allowing local municipalities to tie into the system. That prospect is less expensive than the other option - building a new wastewater treatment facility in Port Allen, which has an estimated price tag of \$10 million.

While the prospect is exciting, the repairs to the existing facility will need to happen whether Grön Fuels decides to locate at the Port or not, Arikol said. A final decision from Grön Fuels is expected sometime this year.

### Other budget items

Other big ticket items include the annual road enhancement program with a \$375,000 price tag. About \$60,000 of that is set aside each year for drainage projects in problem areas.

The Police Department budget includes an additional \$101,968 for three new vehicles and furniture. Upgrades to the City Council chambers will run approximately \$43,000.

The City Council unanimously approved a motion to introduce the budget. Typically the budget is passed in June ahead of the fiscal year beginning in July. In the upcoming meetings, Council Members will be able to introduce and discuss amendments to the proposed budget.

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## Vaccinated residents now exempt from most Louisiana mask mandates



Photo by The West Side Journal

West Baton Rouge's first mass vaccination event held on April 6.

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Gov. John Bel Edwards announced that based on the recommendations by the CDC and in consultation with the Louisiana Dept. of Health, those who are fully vaccinated no longer have to wear masks indoors except in certain situations includ-

effective at protecting us from the virus and helping us return to the normal way of life we have all been working hard to achieve," Gov. Edwards said. "Following the new CDC guidance and in consultation with the LDH, I have revised the current proclamation to give anyone who is fully vaccinated the option to no longer wear a

**"We have made tremendous progress in Louisiana with nearly 3 million doses administered and more than 1.3 million residents fully vaccinated and protected."**

**— Gov. John Bel Edwards**

ing: educational facilities, public transit, correctional settings, and health care facilities as regulated by LDH.

This is in addition to recent guidance that also eased restrictions on masks outdoors for those who are fully vaccinated. Businesses may decide whether to continue requiring patrons to wear masks and are not limited by the revised proclamation. Further, local governments will continue to be able to make decisions to have further restrictions, including face covering requirements, in place.

"Today is a great day and a clear sign that all three COVID vaccines currently available are not only safe but extremely

mask while indoors in most places.

"We have made tremendous progress in Louisiana with nearly 3 million doses administered and more than 1.3 million residents fully vaccinated and protected. Cases, hospitalizations and deaths continue to decrease and as more people, which now includes adolescents ages 12-15, are able to get the vaccine and that gives us an even greater opportunity to put this pandemic behind us," Edwards said. "There may still be some who choose to wear their masks in any setting, and those individuals should be respected and supported

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## One dead, one missing after crash on LA 415 during Monday night storm

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Shortly before 9:30 p.m. on May 17, Louisiana State Police began investigating a fatal crash on LA Hwy 415 north of Interstate 10. The crash took the life of 40-year-old Alvarado Morentes Hermelindo of Port Allen and has resulted in the search of an unidentified passenger.

The initial investigation revealed the crash occurred as an unidentified driver and his two passengers were traveling southbound on LA Hwy 415 in a 2012 Toyota Venza. For reasons still under investigation, the Toyota exited the roadway to the right and proceeded into a canal bordering the roadway. After entering the canal, the Toyota became submerged.

Hermelindo sustained fatal injuries as a result of the crash and was pronounced deceased on the scene. The unidentified passenger has yet to be located and a search is ongoing. The remaining passenger sustained minor injuries and received medical treatment on the scene. This crash remains under investigation.

Troopers urge motorists to use caution when traveling during poor weather conditions, especially after sunset. Water can rise quickly resulting in flash flooding of roadways,

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