



Proposed Growth of Biloxi

City seeks to grow to northeast; property owner seeks to become part of Biloxi

Two cases are pending in court that could see Biloxi's boundaries expand northward.

The first is an "inclusion case" in which property owner James C. Frisby is asking that 1,312 acres he owns just outside the Biloxi city limits near Old Woolmarket Road and immediately adjacent to the city's existing northern boundaries be made part of the city.

Frisby, who plans to create more than 5,000 housing units on his overall 1,478 acres of land, said he wants the city-level fire and police protection the city offers. As part of his development, called Belle La Vie, he plans to construct and donate a fire station and municipal center to the city. A total of 166 acres of the proposed development are already in the city.

"We certainly welcome someone being part of our city," Mayor A.J. Holloway said, noting that only property in the Belle La Vie project is involved in the inclusion suit. "Mr. Frisby is saying that he likes what he sees in Biloxi, and he wants to be a part of it. This is a great third-party endorsement."

The Frisby case is scheduled to be in court May 12, 2008.

In the second case, the City of Biloxi has begun the process of enlarging its boundaries to extend municipal-level services to an area of about 12-square miles on the city's current northeastern edge.

The City Council passed a resolution that would annex an area that runs several miles to the north of the city and meets the existing borders of Jackson County and D'Iberville on the east. D'Iberville and Harrison County are both contesting the annexation.

The case is scheduled for trial Oct. 6, 2008.

Said Mayor A.J. Holloway, who introduced the proposal: "Biloxi must protect and preserve its path of future growth, and the city is in the best position to serve this area."

"I don't want to see Biloxi boxed in, like Jackson or Hattiesburg, which are surrounded by smaller cities and unable to grow."

Biloxi to continue water, sewer progress in Woolmarket

In all, \$64 million in improvements on tap

The much-anticipated water and sewer services are a step closer to becoming a reality in Woolmarket.

Mayor A.J. Holloway, during his State of the City address in February, reported that the city has now received two of the three necessary approvals to install water and sewer lines along Highway 67, which would expand city service north of the interstate.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality on Jan. 24 approved the city's application to install a sewer line. The Mississippi Department of Transportation had given approval to install water and sewer lines along the same route, and now the city is awaiting approval from the Mississippi Department of Health.

"In all, there is \$64 million in water and sewer work that will be done in Woolmarket over the next three years," Holloway said, noting the funding is being provided by state and federal grants. "This work will include installing water and sewer lines, water wells, pump stations and a new wastewater treatment plant to serve this area."

The city last year completed installation of an elevated water tank off Oaklawn Road and introduced city water service to residents and new businesses on Oaklawn south of Interstate 10, and completed a half-million project to install a water well just north of the interstate.

In fact, City Engineer Damon Torricelli said, the city had completed sewer design plans and received approvals from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and the Mississippi Department of Transportation to install sewer lines along Highway 67, and was in the process of approaching City Council members to cover a funding shortfall when Hurricane Katrina struck.

"With everything we were dealing with in the wake of the storm, the permits expired, and now we're having to re-submit to DEQ and MDOT," Torricelli said. "But now we're taking things a step further, and instead of just installing sewer, we're going to use federal funds to also install water service at the same time."

Q&A on city services in Woolmarket

Biloxi has invested millions each year providing municipal-level services to the residents of Woolmarket and others who became part of the city in 1999.

Some examples, based on reports from individual departments:

•**Biloxi Police Department:** Averages 160 calls a day for service in the Woolmarket community, with a response time of under five minutes in 92 percent of the cases. The Police Department has six patrol officers assigned to Woolmarket, totaling more than \$350,000 paid in annual salaries.

•**Biloxi Fire Department:** Averages 77 emergency calls a month in Woolmarket, with an average response time of about 4 minutes and 44 seconds. The department operates three stations that serve Woolmarket – including a two-year-old, million-dollar station on Oaklawn Road. A total of 50 firefighters are assigned to Woolmarket, working in three 24-hour shifts, with a total annual salary of \$3.04 million.

•**Public Works Department:** Since 2000, has cleaned more than 508 miles of ditches in Woolmarket, and repaired nearly 40,000 potholes. The department has invested \$7.4 million in major improvement projects, personnel and equipment. Among the major projects: \$1.7 million for an elevated water tank; \$1.1 million for repairs to the Cedar Lake Bridge; \$585,500 on installing a Woolmarket water well, \$407,000 in upgrades to the Woolmarket treatment plant; and \$351,000 in Oaklawn Road improvements. The Public Works Department has 21 workers assigned north of the Bay, accounting for \$947,000 in total salaries.

•**Parks and Recreation Department:** Has invested more than \$1.4 million on programs, personnel and park improvements since Woolmarket became part of the city. Each year, more than 300 or so Woolmarket youth take part in a year-round menu of city sports leagues in Woolmarket, with no

city registration fees required. Each year the city has also operated two Woolmarket sites for its eight-week summer camp program, offering an array of activities for campers. In 2007, the program grew to three Woolmarket sites.

•**Community Development Department:** Issues an average of 885 construction permits of one type or another each year in the Woolmarket area. The department currently has either approved or is reviewing plans for 14 subdivision in the community, mostly one or two lot subdivisions, except for the 544-lot Belle La Vie proposal. The department investigates 20 to 25 code enforcement cases in Woolmarket in an average month.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What about the city's promise to provide water and sewer service to Woolmarket?

The city has invested millions on water and sewer service, and is currently going through the state permitting process to resume work interrupted by Hurricane Katrina. As part of the plan, the city will install water and sewer lines a mile north of Interstate 10, along Highway 67. Budget for the work: \$2.2 million.

Municipal water systems are supposed to be operated as a business, and, as such, services are expanded where "economically feasible." As a result, installation of city water and sewer began south of Interstate 10, where the majority of residents in the newly incorporated area resided, and is now moving north of I-10.

How much money in property taxes do residents of Woolmarket pay to the city each year?

Woolmarket residents pay about \$900,000 a year in property taxes. If you look at services, employee salaries and equipment, the city spends about five times that amount in Woolmarket each year.

The mayor said he is aware of the importance of providing water and sewer service in the community.

"However, the issue of installing water and sewer service in an area where no previous service or suitable treatment plant ever existed is a time-consuming task, which is obvious by the time it has taken to date. But the fact is, we were starting from scratch. More progress has been made in the past several years than at any other time in the history of Woolmarket. Last year, the city installed a million-

gallon elevated water tank as one of the first steps in bringing water service to the area."

As part of that project, Holloway said, the city installed water service and fire hydrants in the area of Oaklawn, south of I-10. "We have essentially three fire stations serving the Woolmarket community and each is manned by four firefighters 24 hours a day," Holloway said. "This gives Woolmarket residents a sense of security, and, more importantly, lower fire insurance rates."