

# THE State of the City 2001



Mayor A.J. Holloway

## We're dealing with the issues and moving our city forward

My fellow Biloxian:

As we enter the New Year, I'm proud to report to you that your municipal government is busier than ever. In fact, in the past several months, we've dealt with more major issues than we've dealt with in quite some time.

This report is designed to give you the status of major projects and initiatives that the City Council and I have been working on and to give you an idea of what's coming up.

You'll find a wealth of information in this newsletter, as well as at our newly designed web site.

Here's a quick overview of some of the big issues that we've been dealing with:

One of the first things we did when we started the new term in July was take another look at Caillavet Street. We moved the road over 25 feet to the west, which is going to help us on some of the property acquisition and move this project forward. Right now, we're moving forward on that project. We're anxious to begin construction after all of the property is acquired.

We've also hired a new chief administrative officer, Jim Borsig, to replace David Nichols, who opted to open his own consulting firm. I was sorry to lose David, but I've been very pleased with the job that Jim is doing.

After an exhaustive search for a new police chief, we decided to promote one of our veteran officers, Assistant Chief Bruce Dunagan, to the position of police chief. This, of course, opened up the position of assistant chief, which is now filled by another Biloxi Police veteran, Rodney McGilvary.

I appreciate the job done by the five-member advisory panel on this task.

The 36 applications from 11 states for the chief's position speaks volumes about the tremendous respect and integrity of our Biloxi Police Department. I'm very

proud of how far our department has come in the past several years. We have integrity. We have respect. Crime has not been an issue in our city, and I want to keep it that way.

We're moving forward with our land-use and zoning ordinances. You've already heard about the parts that help us control and police the adult-oriented businesses. We're also coming forward with easy-to-understand zoning laws.

This has been a long process, but you have to remember that these ordinances have not been overhauled since the 1950s – a half-century ago. And let me be clear about this: We're going to be very careful with this. We need to balance the rights of property owners and the welfare of the whole community.

Speaking of balancing acts, we're continuing to negotiate with Secretary of State Eric Clark on doing what's best for Biloxi at Point Cadet. I want to do something that works for the Isle of Capri and for J.L. Scott. The Isle is our business partner. They are a good partner. J.L. Scott is also important to the city. We're getting closer to working things out at Point Cadet.

Those are just a few of the major issues. I encourage you to read this newsletter to learn more about your city and city government.

I'm proud of the job that we've been doing for you, but we can't do it all. We need your input and guidance. Stay involved by attending City Council and ward meetings. Follow our progress through our weekly radio program, "City Desk," each Thursday morning on Q92.5 FM, or visit the city web site.

God bless you and God bless Biloxi

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.J. Holloway".



George Lawrence  
Ward 1



Eric Dickey  
Ward 2



Jim Compton  
Ward 3



Charles T. Harrison, Jr.  
Ward 4



Mike Fitzpatrick  
Ward 5



Tom Wall  
Ward 6



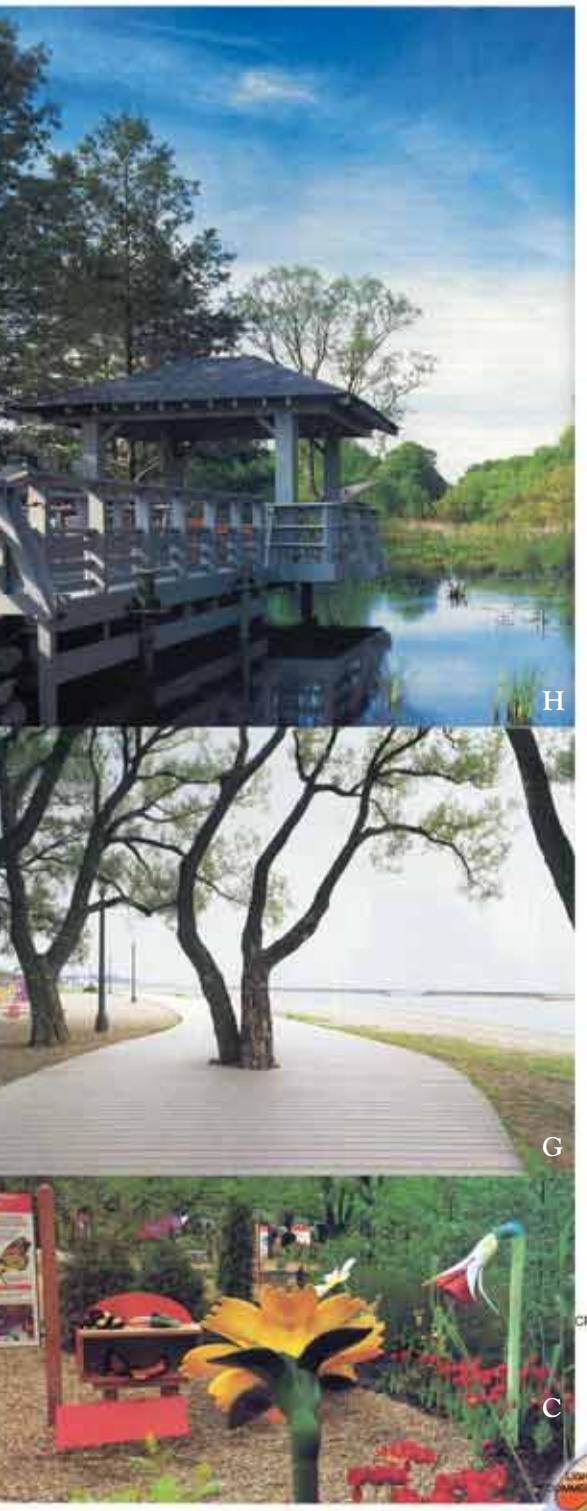
David Fayard  
Ward 7

## City Council

We invite you to read this report as well as the other information at the Biloxi website, [biloxi.ms.us](http://biloxi.ms.us).

While there's certainly a great deal of work still to be accomplished throughout our City, we believe that this information will help you to understand what is being done to promote the best interests of all citizens through a diversity of projects, programs and activities.

# Residents give input on Popp's Ferry causeway park



Close to 150 residents turned out for a meeting recently to see the possibilities for recreational uses of city property at the Popp's Ferry causeway and give their opinions on what should be done at the waterfront site.

The meeting was hosted by Mayor A.J. Holloway and Harrison County District 5 Supervisor Connie Rockco.

The City of Biloxi purchased the 10-acre causeway site for \$650,000 in 2000 and employed a firm – Cashio, Cochran of New Orleans – that specializes in outdoor waterfront design to help produce a master plan. The city and the county

have set aside close to a million dollars including state tidelands funds and have applied for grants to help fund the project.

Said Holloway, "There are a number of possibilities here, including nature trails, picnicking areas, and improvements to the piers, bulkheads and boat ramps. We're encouraged by the input, and now we're going to begin designing something we'll all use and be proud of."

Holloway said that he and Rockco will be returning to the public with final plans in the next few months.



## Holloway names Dunagan as new police chief



Bruce Dunagan, a decorated Vietnam veteran and 27-year veteran of the Biloxi Police Department, is Biloxi's new police chief.

Mayor A.J. Holloway made the announcement at a news conference at the Lopez-Quave Public Safety Center this month, and the City Council OK'd his choice a few days later. The choice was met with a standing ovation by the standing-room-only crowd of rank-and-file officers who attended the conference. Also present was a five-member advisory panel the mayor set up to review the 36 applications received for the position.

Holloway also named Rodney McGilvary, another veteran officer, as assistant chief.

Dunagan, 54, has worked his way up the ranks of the police department and served as assistant chief for the past eight years. He also is a graduate of the prestigious FBI National Academy in Quantico, Va.

"Bruce is a proven leader," said Holloway, who noted that his was ranked first or second by each of the five members of the advisory panel. "He knows Biloxi and he knows how to do the job."

McGilvary, 47 and a 25-year veteran of the department, has served as chief of the department's patrol division for several years. He had reached the rank of major.

Dunagan will replace retiring chief Tommy Moffett, who left Biloxi Sept. 28 to become the chief of the Vicksburg Police Department.

"My goal was to do a thorough search and name a new police chief by the end of this month," Holloway said. "I'm very pleased that this process is ahead of schedule."

The new chief will oversee a department of about 140 sworn officers, 55 civilians and a \$14 million budget.

The city sought applicants through newspaper ads in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. The 36 applicants covered 11 states. Holloway's advisory committee was composed of District Attorney Cono Caranna, Harrison County Sheriff George Payne, retired Air Force Gen. Clark Griffith, and businessmen Loyce Searight and Ed Gemmill.

# City, BFI enhance neighborhood trash cleanup

The City of Biloxi and BFI have teamed up to help remove debris from curbs and sidewalks in neighborhoods – and move it quicker.

Additionally, the city and BFI are asking residents to place trash in dumpsters that have been placed at six locations throughout the city.

In October, BFI expanded its service, adding a trash route each Wednesday in west Biloxi areas where automated cans are located and each Friday in Woolmarket where automated cans are located. Garbage pick up schedules will not change.

In other areas of the city, where automated cans are not yet located, BFI garbage trucks are picking up more trash and debris with their regular garbage service. Automated receptacles are expected to be installed citywide in early 2002.

"This new effort, along with our ongoing work through Community Court, will help us remove trash more quickly from our neighborhood streets," said Biloxi

Mayor A.J. Holloway. "We also hope that residents will do their part by using the neighborhood dumpsters to help keep trash off sidewalks."

The dumpsters, which are for non-commercial use and non-hazardous material, have been placed in parking lots at the following locations:

- Herbert Mullin Senior Center, Pine Street
- Kuhn Street water tower
- Yankie Stadium, Division Street
- Bay Vista fire station, Pass Road
- Margaret Sherry Library, Popp's Ferry Road
- Woolmarket Fire Station, Old Woolmarket Road.

Any refrigerators or air conditioners to be removed must have proper environmental tags. Also, the city and BFI are not responsible for removing debris left by contractors or tree removal firms.



Residents in east Biloxi have filled up the Lee Street dumpster with limbs and discarded furniture. The city and BFI will empty the dumpster, along with others around the city, on a regular basis.

## COMMUNITY COURT

# getting the job done



The numbers say that more than 70 cases have come before Community Court since January, when the city launched the new division of Municipal Court to help streamline cleaning up neighborhoods and dealing with Code Enforcement issues.

But the real story is the cases that didn't make it to Community Court.

Officials with the Code Enforcement Division and the Fire Department say that more than 500 cases were settled during the 10-day grace period that the city allows before taking cases to court.

"The initial reaction was skeptical to the new process," said Code Enforcement Officer Hank Rogers. "However, as cases began to catch the eyes and ears of the public, once they began to see that we were serious, attitudes changed and responses improved tremendously, from the viewpoint of the benefiting public and that of the offender, respectively. We're finding that an order to appear before a Judge is taken much more seriously than a letter from the city."

For years, inspectors from the Fire Department could only notify property owners about expired fire extinguishers or other infractions, and hope the property owner would make improvements.

Now, inspectors are armed with Community Court, which can levy fines if improvements aren't made.

The city launched Community Court in January to help speed up the lengthy process required to force owners to bring their property into compliance with city codes. Typical complaints include high grass or weeds on abandoned lots; unsecured houses or buildings; or abandoned vehicles, either on rights-of-way or on private property.

Before Community Court was inaugurated, it could take months to either force property owners to bring their property into compliance or have the city do the work and assess a clean-up fee to the property owner's property taxes.



*Community Court is prompting residents and businessowners to take pride in the appearance of their property, as seen in these before and after photographs.*

With Community Court, property owners must appear before a judge and, if found in violation, face fines of up to \$1,000 per violation, a jail sentence of up to 90 days for each violation, and pay court costs. And if the property owner still refuses to bring his property into compliance, the city may still perform the work and assess the costs to the property taxes.

"One of the single greatest advantages of the Community Court is that a violation can be identified and a citation issued immediately, especially in the case of a life-safety issue," said Rogers. "The court also provides a single platform for interdepartmental cooperation and enforcement. The code enforcement officer, zoning enforcement officer, fire inspector, police officer or engineer can work hand-in-hand on resolving these issues."

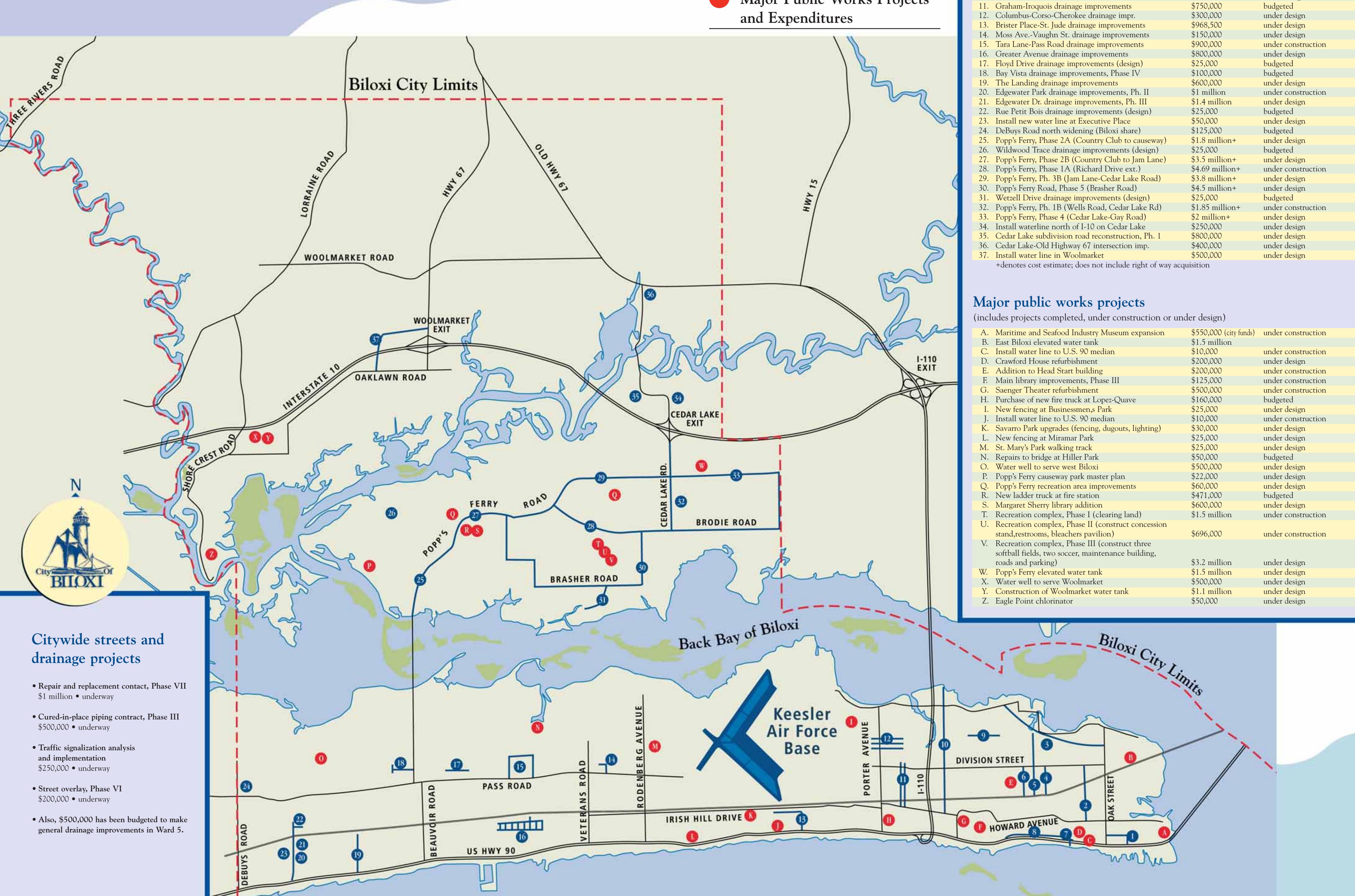
Community Court, which is held every Tuesday at the Lopez-Quave Public Safety Center, has its own judge, Dean Wilson, and prosecutor, Joy Goundas.

The city launched the Community Court division after reviewing similar operations in Mobile and Hattiesburg.

"When someone lets their property fall in disrepair, it depreciates the entire neighborhood. It's a domino effect," Mayor A.J. Holloway said. "We've worked in a grace period to work with people, and we thank those who have taken action without having to go all the way to court. But people need to understand that we're going to enforce these ordinances without fear or favor. We have to keep our neighborhoods clean and safe."

# Status of major projects

November 2001





# Work progressing on sports complex

City contractors are clearing land and construction has begun on the concessions and control facility for a new sports complex off Popp's Ferry Road.

The \$10 million complex, which is being constructed by the city on 68.8 acres of public school land near new Biloxi High School, will feature five softball fields, eight tennis courts, four soccer fields, covered viewing stands and picnic areas.

The facility is being built in phases. Phase I, which is expected to be completed by the end of the year, will include clearing and grubbing of all land, as well as adding utilities and earth work for three of the softball fields. Phase I cost is \$1.1 million.

In Phase II, which is also underway, contractor Lloyd Moon is constructing a two-story facility to house a concession stand and control facility that is centered among the softball five plex. The facility, which is expected to be completed in several months, is being built at a cost of \$696,000.



## Snyder center becoming popular gathering spot

For further information on Community Center activities and prices call 435-6185.

The Donal Snyder Community Center is becoming a popular gathering spot these days – and the future looks promising, too, with special events booked well into 2002 at the Pass Road facility.

The two-story, \$4.1 million facility, which features a gymnasium/ballroom, swimming and therapeutic pools, racquetball courts and indoor walking track, has been hosting between 150 and 200 people a day since it opened in May. It is also home to senior citizens programs each month.

"We've been pleased with the response," Mayor A.J. Holloway said. "Do the math. That's between 3,000 and 4,000 people a month using this facility, and we feel we have a lot to offer them."

The center is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. The lap and therapeutic pools are open from 2 to 7 p.m. There is no admission fee to enter the facility, but there is a \$1 fee for swimming and a minimal per-hour fee to reserve racquetball courts.

The center's focus on "wellness," with a weight room and indoor walking track, have made it a natural for senior citizens activities.

Center staffer Greg Peters, who has a background in

physical fitness management, offers free "Stretch and Strengthen" classes every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:30 p.m. Additionally, other senior activities, such as cake-decorating, watercoloring and luncheons are held, along with field trips.

"We're also making sure to balance the programming between our centers," said Recreation Superintendent Sherry Bell. "Anything we do on the west end of town, we try to offer on the east end, either at the Community Center on Howard Avenue or O'Hanlon. All of our centers work well together."

The uniqueness of the Snyder center, however, is making it the new hot spot for family or social gatherings or meetings. The 33,000-square-foot facility has multiple bookings for every month throughout 2002.

"The thing that's getting booked the most is the multi-purpose room, off the lobby," said Bell. "The room has a capacity of 160 people and you have a full-blown commercial kitchen right there."

Said Holloway, "Web sites are constantly evolving, and we're going to strive to keep this site timely and offer even more services in the future. The goal is making it easy to deal with city government."

## City buys land in Woolmarket for fire station, other services

The City of Biloxi has purchased close to 20 acres of property in Woolmarket to serve as location for a new fire station, water tower and other city facilities.

The 19.64-acre site, which the city is purchasing for more than \$432,000 or \$22,000 an acre, is actually two adjoining parcels on Oaklawn Drive, immediately south of Interstate 10.

Mayor A.J. Holloway, who recommended the purchase, said the property would be the site of a new fire station, a water tower, nature trails and picnicking areas. An existing house on the property could be used

for community meetings and other functions, Holloway said, adding that four acres of the site are wetlands, which the city will protect.

"We're committed to continuing to bring city level services to the area of the city, and we believe that this is a good purchase for the city," Holloway said. "It's a great location."

Ward 7 Councilman David Fayard, who made the motion to purchase the property, said he was pleased with the acquisition and was eager to see the city move forward with the new facilities.

*"...we believe that this is a good investment for the city,"*

— Mayor A.J. Holloway

*"We've been able to expand services, build a new public safety center and a new community center, rebuild streets, improve drainage, and cut city taxes by 10 percent, but we've got to be careful now," Holloway said. "I think it would be dangerous to forecast significant increases in revenue with the way the national economy is looking these days."*

## Holloway sees minimal growth in revenue

Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway, leery of the uncertain national economy, included only a 1 percent revenue growth in a \$120 million municipal budget proposal passed by the Biloxi City Council.

The budget includes more than \$20 million for Biloxi public schools.

The school system, in the midst of a \$50 million citywide construction program, is requesting a half-mill or about \$235,000 increase in funding, but that increase should be offset by the mayor's budget proposal and because the legislature increased the homestead exemption from \$60,000 to \$75,000 last year.

Homeowners in the Biloxi school district may see a

slight tax decrease – about \$28 on a \$100,000 home – under the budget proposal.

Most departmental spending in the new budget was kept at previous levels except for public safety, which increases by \$1.7 million to hire 19 additional firefighters, primarily to serve the Woolmarket area.

The budget also includes funds for a number of ongoing projects, including a new water tank in the Woolmarket area, work on the Popp's Ferry recreation complex at the new high school, widening of Popp's Ferry Road, completion of property acquisition on Bayview and Caillavet, and drainage projects on First Street, Edgewater Drive and Holley Street.

Residents and visitors will find it easier to do business with the City of Biloxi, thanks to an overhaul of the city's web site, which made its debut Nov. 1.

## Biloxi launches improved web site at biloxi.ms.us

Visitors to the web site at biloxi.ms.us will find meeting agendas, forms for renting city facilities or applying for zoning and building permits, twice-daily updates of road construction work, information about all city departments, and links to public service web sites.

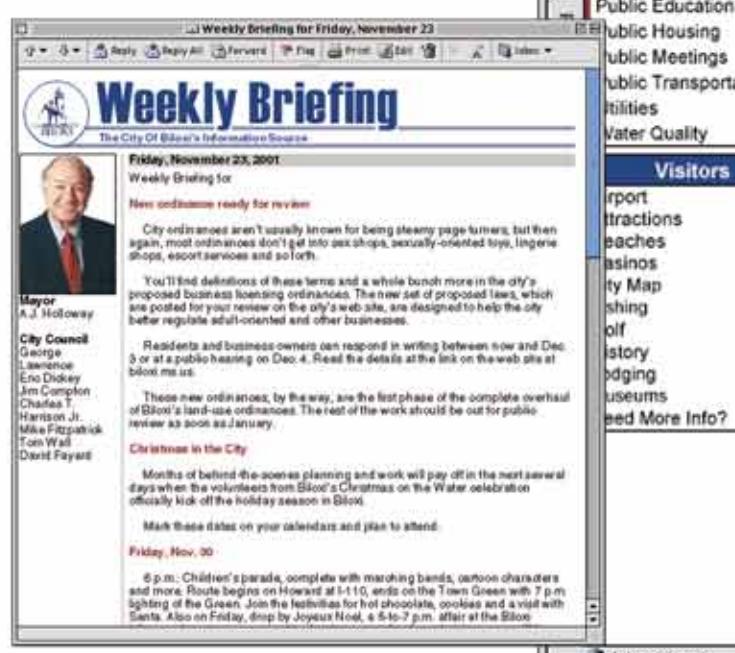
Additionally, visitors to the web site can sign up for e-mail news from the city, including a "Weekly Briefing" presenting each Friday with news about upcoming city events, issues and projects.

"With this site and the Weekly Briefing, we are giving citizens 24-hour access to city information and city services," said Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway, who also taped a video welcome for the site. "We want to continue to use this sort of technology to help us do a better job."

The site, which is overseen by Public Affairs Manager Vincent Creel, was designed by Marketzap.com and is hosted by Digiscape, two Biloxi firms.

Biloxi first launched its web site in 1996 and a year later received a national award from Snap Online!, a national internet service, for the site's appearance, packaging, content and ease to use.

Said Holloway, "Web sites are constantly evolving, and we're going to strive to keep this site timely and offer even more services in the future. The goal is making it easy to deal with city government."



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and initiatives by visiting  
our web site at [biloxi.ms.us](http://biloxi.ms.us)  
or tuning to "City Desk"  
each Thursday at 9:05 a.m.  
on Q92.5 FM.



## Frequently Called Numbers

Animal Control.....	435-6103	Fire Department .....	435-6200	Planning Office .....	435-6266
Auto Tag Information .....	435-8242	Garbage Pick Up .....	392-5108	Police Department .....	435-6100
Biloxi Credit Union.....	432-0284	Harrison County Information .....	865-4000	Recreation Program Information .....	435-6148
Biloxi Personnel Office .....	435-6259	Health Department, Biloxi .....	435-3641	Saenger Theater .....	435-6290
Biloxi Public School District .....	374-1810	Homeowner Assistance Programs.....	435-6280	Scheduling/Reserving Facilities .....	435-6281
Building Permits .....	435-6270	<b>Mayor's Office .....</b>	<b>435-6254</b>	Special Events .....	435-6339
Business Licenses.....	435-6247	Municipal Court Clerk .....	435-6125	Street and Drainage Problems .....	435-6271
<b>City Council Office.....</b>	<b>435-6257</b>	Museum Information.....	435-6244	Street and Drainage Problems (after hours) ....	435-6103
Code Enforcement Complaints .....	435-6270	Natatorium .....	436-6108	Tree Permits.....	435-6280
Driver's License Information.....	432-7803	Outreach (ADA & volunteer) Services...	435-6297	Visitor Information (Town Green) .....	374-3105
Economic Development Foundation.....	392-9744	Parks & Recreation Information .....	435-6281	Voter Registration .....	435-6279

Visit the City of Biloxi website at <http://biloxi.ms.us>



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