

STEVE WATKINS, MAYOR
NAOMI SHEPHERD, CITY CLERK



ALDERMAN:
JOE BROOKS, WARD 1
BRIDGETT M. PETERS, WARD 2
RONALD HOLLOWAY, WARD 3
STEVE NEELY, WARD 4
HARRY WHEAT III, AT-LARGE

Veto Message from the Mayor to the City of Quitman Board of Aldermen

Date Issued: August 18, 2023

Veto Message No. 007

**CONCERNING THE MOTION MADE BY ALDERWOMAN BRIDGETT PETERS
AND SECONDED BY ALDERMAN JOE BROOKS
IN RESPONSE TO THE ORDER:**

**TO INCREASE
ALDERMAN'S MONTHLY PAY
AN ADDITIONAL \$500.00 PER MONTH
YIELDING A MONTHLY PAY RATE OF
\$1,000.00 PER MONTH FOR EACH ALDERMAN**

During the Regular Board of Aldermen meeting on August 15, 2023, in response to the Mayor's call for items needing to be added to the agenda, Alderwoman Bridgett Peters added New Business Item Number 9.k. (Salaries) and the agenda was subsequently confirmed with all additions included. At the appropriate time of discussion for agenda Item Number 9.k. (Salaries), Alderwoman Bridgett Peters explained that she was seeking an increase in alderman monthly pay.

ALDERWOMAN BRIDGETT PETERS then made the following motion:

To give each alderman a \$500.00 per month increase in pay.

ALDERMAN JOE BROOKS seconded the motion,

and a roll call vote was taken as follows:

Ward 1 Alderman Joe Brooks	Voted	YES
Ward 2 Alderwoman Bridgett Peters	Voted	YES
Ward 3 Alderman Ron Holloway	Voted	NO
Ward 4 Alderman Steve Neely	Voted	YES
Alderman At Large Harry Wheat	Voted	NO

Mayor Steve Watkins declared the motion passed.

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CITY OF QUITMAN *W*

VETO

Therefore, I, Steve Watkins, Mayor of the City of Quitman, Mississippi operating under the authority and in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 21-3-15 et seq. do hereby VETO the above Order issued by the City of Quitman Board of Aldermen on August 15, 2023, concerning increasing alderman compensation an additional \$500.00 per month, yielding a monthly pay rate of \$1,000.00 per month for each alderman, resulting in a \$30,000.00 increase in the City of Quitman annual budget, for the following reasons:

At the Regular Board of Aldermen meeting on August 1, 2023, I presented the “**City of Quitman Resolution of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen Declaring a City Emergency**” to the Board of Aldermen for their review and approval. I explained, this action was necessary due to the economic hardship imposed on City of Quitman businesses as a result of the July 16, 2023 collapse of the earthen dam and the destruction of the emergency spillway at Archusa Creek Lake. I further explained, as a result of the Archusa dam failure, the number of visitors to Archusa Creek Water Park will be substantially reduced, for an unknown period of time, which will lead to a drastic drop in business revenue with the potential of quickly leading to a catastrophic drop in sales tax revenue for the municipality. All four aldermen in attendance voted in the affirmative for the City Emergency Declaration. Alderman Joe Brooks was absent from this board meeting.

On August 14, 2023, during the Mayor and Board of Aldermen’s final budget work session, I reminded the four aldermen in attendance that the City of Quitman is in a Declared Economic Emergency and must consider this when approving the final budget. Alderwoman Bridgett Peters was absent from this work session. In order to find a proposed 2023-2024 budget that would balance our General Fund and allow our Aldermen to be in agreement to support, required removing over \$150,000.00 in police and street department equipment purchases alone, to avoid increasing the millage rate so as not to increase taxes for the citizens of Quitman. At no time during this work session was any reference made to increase alderman compensation.

One day later, on Tuesday, August 15, 2023, three of our aldermen (Alderwoman Peters, Alderman Brooks, and Alderman Neely) voted to give themselves a 100% pay raise, bringing alderman compensation up to \$1,000.00 per month for each alderman.

Summing up, the facts are as follows: (1) on August 1, 2023, the Board of Aldermen found it necessary to declare an **Economic Hardship Emergency for the City of Quitman**, (2) on August 14, 2023 the Board of Aldermen found it necessary to cut more than \$150,000.00 in equipment purchases from the annual budget, and (3) on August 15, 2023, Alderwoman Bridgett Peters, Alderman Joe Brooks, and Alderman Neely voted to give themselves a 100% increase in compensation resulting in a \$30,000.00 increase to the City of Quitman annual budget.

I find it unconscionable for a public servant to vote themselves a raise of any amount, especially a 100% pay raise, while our city is in the midst of an Economic Emergency with our businesses suffering every day, until the dam is restored and our visitors return to Archusa Creek Water Park.

This VETO message was presented to the City Clerk for proper dissemination on Friday, August 18, 2023.



Mayor Steve Watkins