

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

RECEIVED

JUN 09 2023

CITY OF QUITMAN

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

Date Issued: June 9, 2023

Veto Message No. 005

**CONCERNING THE MOTION MADE BY ALDERMAN STEVE NEELY
AND SECONDED BY ALDERMAN HARRY WHEAT
IN RESPONSE TO
HISTORIC CLARKE COUNTY, INC.
BEING CHARGED LATE FEES OF TEN DOLLARS (\$10.00) PER DAY
WHEN THE HISTORIC BOX CAR MONTHLY RENTAL FEE OF \$225.00 PER MONTH
IS NOT PAID IN A TIMELY MANNER**

At the Regular Board of Alderman meeting for June 6, 2023, Alderman Steve Neely added Unfinished Business Item Number 8.h. to the agenda listed as "Boxcar Rent." At the appropriate time of discussion for Item Number 8.h., Alderman Neely asked if anyone knew how long it had been since the board ordered Historic Clarke County to begin paying monthly rent. The City Clerk advised that it had been about a month or possibly a little over a month ago.

Alderman Steve Neely then made the following motion: "I would like to add a late fee charge if the rent isn't paid in a timely manner, like we have anywhere that is not paying rent, that would be added to the rental agreement a late fee of ten dollars per day for every day late."

Prior to the roll call vote being taken, Alderman Steve Neely added: "Again, as I stated before, when we got into this, if they want to solve this simply, they can donate it to the city and it will become city property."

Alderman Harry Wheat seconded the motion, and a roll call vote was taken as follows:

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

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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 June 6, 2023, concerning a late fee of ten dollars (\$10.00) per day when the Mississippi Landmark Boxcar monthly rental fee of two hundred twenty five dollars (\$225.00) per month is not paid in a timely manner by Historic Clarke County, Inc., for the following reasons:

Historic Clarke County is registered as a 501c3 nonprofit organization which provides historical benefit to all of Clarke County. When the Board of Aldermen ordered Historic Clarke County to begin paying rent for the Mississippi Landmark Boxcar on March 21, 2023, I issued Veto Message No. 002 which was subsequently overridden by the Board. As I stated in Veto Message No. 002 on March 29, 2023, "the City of Quitman has maintained a long established practice, spanning twenty-four years, of not charging Historic Clarke County rent, for allowing them to place the GM&O boxcar on city property, and has no valid reason to suddenly begin charging now."

Since I believe there is no valid reason to suddenly begin charging rent now, I further believe there is also no valid reason to begin charging late fees on that rent. This is not the way to conduct city business. If the Historic GM&O Boxcar were not a Mississippi Landmark then maybe your tactics would have some validity for normal business practices. However, the Historic GM&O Boxcar is a Mississippi Landmark that is protected by the Antiquities Law of Mississippi.

What will you do if Historic Clarke County is unable or unwilling to pay your demand for rent and late fees? As I explained in my Veto Message No. 001, dated March 10, 2023, when you were trying to break up the Mississippi Landmark by requiring Historic Clarke County to remove the Historic GM&O Boxcar from the property, "any proposed changes to the building, the railcar, and/or the property require MDAH review and approval and a Mississippi Landmark Permit authorized by the MDAH Board of Trustees prior to beginning work" and it is very unlikely that approval would ever be given. Are you sure that you are not already in violation of the Antiquities Law of Mississippi, risking a lawsuit from the Mississippi Attorney General's Office?

So what will you do, override yet another veto and begin accumulating a large debit against Historic Clarke County? Then what, turn Historic Clarke County over to a collection agency which would have a high probability of yet another lawsuit?

In my opinion, your actions thus far, in relation to Historic Clark County and the Mississippi Landmark Boxcar, serve no purpose other than exposing the City of Quitman to unnecessary liability issues. Therefore, I am compelled to veto the aforementioned actions of the Board of Aldermen on June 6, 2023.

This VETO message was presented to the City Clerk for proper dissemination on Friday, June 9, 2023.



Mayor Steve Watkins