

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: January 9, 2025

Veto Message No. 009



A VETO CONCERNING
THE MOTION MADE BY ALDERMAN STEVE NEELY
AND SECONDED BY ALDERMAN HARRY WHEAT

RECEIVED
JAN 09 2025
CITY OF QUITMAN

IN RESPONSE TO:
THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN'S ORDER TO DELAY
REINSTALLATION OF THE QUITMAN DEPOT FLAGPOLE
UNTIL COMPLETION OF THE QUITMAN DEPOT RESTORATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

During the Regular Mayor and Board of Aldermen meeting on January 7, 2025, when Agenda Item 10.f. (*Acknowledgement of Storm Damage – December 28, 2024 – Property Insurance Claim – Quitman Depot*) was discussed, I informed the Board that the City was in the process of obtaining quotes for the replacement of the Quitman Depot flagpole, which was unfortunately damaged by severe weather on December 28, 2024. I also shared that the flagpole was covered under the City's property insurance policy, and we would be submitting a claim along with other property damage from the recent storm.

During the open discussion following the motion to delay the reinstallation of the flagpole, I took the opportunity to remind the Board that renovations due to Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) and architectural approval could take up to another year.

MOTION MADE TO DELAY REINSTALLATION OF THE DEPOT FLAGPOLE:

Alderman Steve Neely stated, "I really think since the depot is shut down and under renovations currently, I think we need to wait until that is completed and then install our flagpole, and I put that in the form of a motion", Alderman Harry Wheat seconded the motion, and all the Aldermen voted in the affirmative with the exception of Alderman Ron Holloway who was not present.

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VETO BY MAYOR STEVE WATKINS:

Dear Members of the Board of Aldermen,

I appreciate the thoughtful consideration and dedication you have shown to the issue of the Quitman Depot flagpole. However, after reviewing the matter further, I feel that I must respectfully veto the decision made on January 7, 2025.

While Alderman Steve Neely's concerns regarding the timing of the flagpole's reinstallation are understandable, I believe they are not fully supported by the advice from the city's architect. The architect confirmed that the only obstacle to completing the restoration work was the landscaping bushes, which have already been addressed. With this in mind, there is no reason to delay the installation of the replacement flagpole for up to a year, especially given that this flagpole is part of a Historical Landmark listed with the United States Department of the Interior and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and also is included in an important insurance claim that requires prompt and complete resolution.

As a veteran, it is particularly important to me to uphold the honor and respect our American Flag deserves, especially when it flies in one of the most prominent locations in our community. Delaying the raising of the flag for any extended period of time feels contrary to the values we hold dear as a patriotic community.

Since the board's decision was shared publicly via live-stream, I have already heard from several citizens who share my sentiments. Quitman has always taken great pride in displaying the American Flag and celebrating the freedoms it represents. I am confident that we all want to see that flag flying proudly once again as a symbol of our shared values.

Therefore, I kindly ask the Board to reconsider the decision made on January 7 and allow this veto to stand. By doing so, we will ensure that the Quitman Depot flagpole is reinstalled promptly, allowing our flag to fly high, as it should, in the spirit of freedom and patriotism.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and for all that you do for our community.

Sincerely,



Mayor Steve Watkins

This veto message was formally submitted to the City Clerk for dissemination on Friday, January 9, 2025 and is considered a public document on this date.