



AUDIO: MDEQ regulator proves mayor, council, and engineers misled citizens while pushing unnecessary \$140 million wastewater project on their community.

BRIEF HISTORY

In 2002 USA Yeast came to Hattiesburg and was allowed to dump raw waste into our lagoon. Within months, the town smelled like methane sulfide gasses. The city's engineer, Bennie Sellers, failed to provide reports to the city council in 2007 identifying the problem as the yeast plant. Sellers even told the Hattiesburg American in May of 2008 that he was still trying to identify the problem. Sellers left the city after council became aware of a 2007 report from United Water that identified the city's smell as originating from USA Yeast's waste. When Sellers left, he landed a job with the Shows, Dearman, and Waits (SDW). SDW was advising the city and Sellers at the time the terrible mistake was made to accept USA Yeast raw waste. No other company in



the industrial park was allowed to discharge waste into the lagoon higher than standard municipal load.

Pretty soon, Hattiesburg was sued for environmental violations by the Gulf Restoration Network, and as part of a settlement with GRN, Hattiesburg had to come up with a new method of wastewater treatment to meet 2015 Phase two permit limits. However, Hattiesburg also sued USA Yeast to modify the terrible discharge contract the city made with the plant. In the settlement with the yeast plant, the Mississippi Development Authority provided \$6 million in funds to pay for a \$10 million treatment plant for USA Yeast. Rod Dickerson, a professional engineer advising Hattiesburg Patriot News, said the new pretreatment plant would be enough to bring the city into compliance with its permit. However, city engineers ignored that solution. Instead, they pushed for more expensive, unnecessary options. Options which would make them millions.

0The USA Yeast pre-treatment plant was to be in place in June of 2014, but delays pushed the plant from coming online until June 2015. Meanwhile, no one proposed waiting for the pretreatment plant to be put into operation before rushing to build something that was predictably unnecessary.

When the pre-treatment plant came online in June of 2015, Hattiesburg almost immediately began meeting Phase Two, 2015 permit limits. But not a single word of this compliance was ever mentioned by the mayor, city council, the engineers, or the attorneys advising the city. And why would the engineers bring attention to something that would eliminate the need to build such a monstrosity?

Kim Bradley, Mary Dryden, Carter Carroll, and Henry Naylor kept pushing Groundworx, and after its failure to materialize, they pushed the mechanical plant.

The Mayor was always for the mechanical plant. Engineers with

Neel Shaffer would make millions off of the mechanical plant, and many in the firm were top Dupree contributors. Attorneys would also make millions underwriting the bonds. Campaign contributions and future job opportunities would likely flow freely.

In August of 2016, Tom Garmon, the founder of the Hattiesburg Patriot, armed with water test results proving Hattiesburg's compliance with its permit for almost a solid year, confronted Christopher Wells, a top MDEQ regulator. Garmon demanded answers as to why the citizens were being fined for failing to begin construction of something that was 100% unnecessary; since the city had been meeting its limits for almost a full year. Well's response was astounding, and it proved the politicians in Hattiesburg, along with their engineers (political contributors), and attorneys were not acting in the best interest of the citizens of this community.

The audio of the call with Garmon and MDEQ is below. A portion of it was played before council, which resulted in the project being killed and sewer rates lowered. This saved Hattiesburg residents close to \$550 million dollars (principal, interest, and operating cost) over 30 years. This would have cost about \$600 annually per household.

MDEQ Attorney, Chris Wells, acknowledges the city has been meeting their permit limits. Chris Wells talks to Hattiesburg Patriot Founder and Mayoral Candidate, Tom Garmon, about stopping the fine, which was giving the Mayor and City Council the political cover to ramrod the construction of a new \$140 million treatment plant.

<https://hattiesburgpatriot.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/94/files/2017/04/MDEQ-edited.mp3>

