



TOWN OF JONESBORO  
MAYOR JAMES E. BRADFORD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 18, 2017

**A DETAILED RESPONSE TO THE 2016 AUDIT REPORT**

JONESBORO, La. – Audits of a municipality’s finances are one of the crucial ways we are held to account to the public. In the 2016 audit report, we received fourteen findings. While we were able to respond to these findings in the report, we were not able to provide an adequate explanation of many actions we took. Understanding that an audit’s findings may be require such, the Town of Jonesboro releases this response to the 2016 audit report to further provide transparency and accountability to the citizens of Jonesboro, Louisiana.

**Findings Addressed**

**2016-001 Improper Treatment of Town Vehicle**

According to a Town ordinance, employees are required to log miles incurred on Town vehicles. However, many of the vehicles in our fleet are old and have odometers that do not work, which makes compliance with this ordinance difficult. On those vehicles whose odometers do work, we do keep mileage logs as required by ordinance. On those who do not, employees have been instructed to document mileage daily, so we can come into compliance with this ordinance.

One of the effects of this as cited by the audit report is vehicles being used for personal use. Personal use of Town vehicles is prohibited by Ordinance 574, Personnel Policy VIII, Sec. III, and Personnel Policy XII, Sec. III. Supervisors are tasked with ensuring policies are strictly followed. The personal use of a Town vehicle is considered grounds for termination.

**2016-007 Noncompliance with Public Bid Law**

We blatantly disagree with this finding by the auditor on this. According to this finding, four purchases were in question: fuel, a fire department vehicle, a bush hog, and the elevated water tank renovation project.

We purchase fuel in bulk and have done so for 30 years. The tanks for the fuel are located on town property and filled by the company at a lower cost than retail. Our alternative would be to issue fuel cards, which presents a greater opportunity for fraud; whereas, fuel pumps on our property and the controls we have in place allow us a greater ability to monitor and ensure fuel purchased by the town is only used for town vehicles. While we disagree with this finding, we have put out a bid for fuel.

As for the fire department vehicle, the finding states by stating the make in our bid specification, we violated the Public Bid Law; however, being a small municipality and having only one

vehicle dealer, we felt it was justified since the Lawrason Act provides that we can prefer local dealers. Further, we purchased this on a state contract.

Concerning the bush hog in question, this piece of equipment was purchased on state contract, and we have the documentation on file to prove it. We are uncertain why this was a finding.

On our elevated water tank renovation project, we deemed this project to be urgent because the tank required critical repairs to its interior and cosmetic repairs to the exterior. Our local paper and official journal is a weekly paper, and the urgency of this project did not provide us adequate time. However, we only received two quotes for the project, accepted the lowest, and this project was approved by the council, contrary to the auditor's findings.

### **2016-010 Overtime Pay Appears to be Excessive**

While we understand the appearance of the overtime pay looks excessive, for Public Works in particular, the Jonesboro Water System's infrastructure is old, outdated, and has been neglected in previous administrations. Because of that, we have several water leaks and breaks, which need to be addressed immediately and incur overtime costs.

For any water leak or break, two Public Works employees are required to address the emergencies, which caused two Public Works employees to receive similar overtime pay.

With the outdated technology, our system operates manually and requires a Public Works employee to manually turn on and off each station, which further contributes to overtime for Public Works. However, we are working to address this by implementing automatic switches for each station. This takes time, and a few of the stations need updated electrical work for these automatic switches, which prolongs their implementation.

Previously, *The News Star* carelessly reported that administrative overtime costs were \$100,000 more than reported by the audit. While our administrative overtime costs were reasonable and justified, starting July 1, 2017, all administrative employees will be placed on a salary to eliminate all administrative overtime costs in the future.

Overtime costs by other departments, such as Fire and Police, are justified and are not excessive.

Overall, we are implementing changes to further minimize overtime costs; however, until we are able to fully renovate our water system's infrastructure, the Town of Jonesboro will continue experiencing overtime costs in the Public Works department.

We also believe in being good stewards of the public's money. While we will continue to implement policies and practices to minimize these costs to the best of our ability, we recognize the reality of operating an outdated and old water system.

### **All Other Findings**

For all other all other findings please refer to the 2016 audit report for the administrative response.

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