

City adjusts utility tree trimming requirements

By Randy Bell

Clinton will no longer require tree-trimming crews to consult with a certified arborist before cutting limbs away from utility lines. The crews won't have to get a City permit before starting their work, and they'll have more time to pick up the limbs they bring down.

The Board of Aldermen voted at its March 7 meeting to amend a City ordinance which Mayor Phil Fisher says was approved several years ago after complaints from citizens that trees were being "butchered." In addition to requiring a permit and the use of an arborist, the previous ordinance directed crews to dispose of cut limbs immediately. Under the amended version, they'll have five days to finish the clean-up.

Ward 1 Alderwoman Karen Godfrey had urged the Board to make the changes, saying that, because of the prior restrictions, Entergy crews had stopped trimming trees in Clinton, resulting in power disruptions.

"There are more outages in Clinton than any other place," says Godfrey. "And that's why, because the trees were not being trimmed." She says she is satisfied with the amended or-



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dinance.

"It's good to bring both parties to the table and make sure that we're doing something that will make a difference for the City and for Entergy."

The mayor is hoping there won't be as many complaints as the tree-trim-

mers get back to work in Clinton.

"We've had an opportunity to review all the issues and everything else," Fisher says. "Let's see how they do with this. And, if it works out, then that's great. And if they work with us, that's wonderful. And

if they don't, then we'll deal with it then."

He's hoping the crews will now be more judicious in how the trees are cut.

"Absolutely. We don't need to have them just stripped down, ripped up and torn up, if another way can be done," Fisher says.

Under the amended ordinance, clearing around utility lines will have to conform to the generally accepted industry standards for tree care practices, known as ANSI A300. Although a permit is no longer required, crews must give the City five days' notice before beginning their maintenance work.

"We thank Mayor Fisher and the Board of Aldermen for the open dialogue on the City's tree trimming ordinances and for unanimously approving the amendments," Entergy Mississippi's Manager of Communications Leyla Goodsell wrote in an email. "These changes will help us maintain our proactive efforts to keep trees, limbs and vines away from our power lines in Clinton, which helps prevent power outages caused by vegetation and improves service reliability for our customers."

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