

Restaurant tax referendum coming up June 9

By Randy Bell

The City of Clinton has launched a voter education campaign as a June 9 special election approaches on whether to renew a two per cent restaurant tax. The tax, which funds parks and recreation improvements in Clinton, was approved in 2022, but state law requires a new vote every four years.

The theme of the campaign is "Every Bite Builds."

Director of Communication and Tourism Marlee Price-Cook says, "I don't really think a lot of people understand that, when you go to a restaurant, you're actually helping build parks."

Price says she is working hard to explain to the public how the \$5.4 million in tax revenue has been spent.

"We have created a website, 'clintonms.org/2percent,' and, on that page, you can find information on what the Parks and Recreation Department has done with that [revenue]. We highlight a lot of the projects—the Brighton Park playground, the pickleball courts and restrooms at Traceway."

The page also provides details about



Tammie Stephens

Restaurant tax collections help fund upgrades to Brighton Park that included poured-in-place rubber flooring, shade structures, perimeter fencing, and a new state-of-the-art inclusive playground.

the newest project, a renovation of the concessions and restroom building at Traceway's Softball 4-Plex. That construction should be completed next year.

In addition to the website, a billboard on Highway 80 is helping to raise awareness about the upcoming election.

"It's just informational," Price-Cook says. "We're not trying to sway any-



Tammie Stephens

Not only do visitors to Kids Towne not have to use a porta potty any longer, but the entire park area was expanded with the addition of Towne Park. The project, funded with restaurant tax collections, brought eight new pickleball courts, a pavilion, a concessions area and permanent restroom facilities to serve Towne Park, Kids Towne Park, and Bark Park.

one, one way or another. Just the facts."

At the State Capitol this year, the Mississippi Legislature, at the City's request, extended the repeal date of the law which authorized the tax, but Clinton voters will make the final decision on whether restaurants will continue to charge the two per cent for another four years.

Sixty per cent approval is needed for the



Special to The Clinton Courier

Rendering of what the completed concessions and restroom building at Traceway's Softball 4-Plex will look like when the project is completed. The project is being funded by restaurant tax collections.

proposal to pass. In 2022, 66 per cent of the voters were in favor of the tax. On June 9, one polling place will be open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. at Traceway Park.

Most of Clinton's surrounding municipalities, including Brandon, Byram, Canton, Florence, Flowood, Jackson, Pearl, Richland and Ridgeland, all have restaurant taxes in place.

Changes in City leave policy discussed

By Randy Bell

An effort to improve City employee benefits could include important changes to Clinton's policies involving annual and sick leave. It was a topic of discussion at a recent Board of Aldermen work session.

"Essentially, the issue is the state will allow [the City] to credit a certain amount of banked leave toward [an employee's] retirement," Mayor Will Purdie explains. "And you can credit up to that amount, [but] you just can't go over. Our current leave policy actually gives employees less leave than the state will give you credit for. So, we're leaving money on the table for our employees in terms of retirement."

Purdie says changing the leave policy to match what the state offers wouldn't cost the City anything and

could encourage people to take and keep City jobs.

"We want to do anything we can to make these positions as competitive as possible to attract and retain talent."

Another proposed change would speed up a newly-hired employee's ability to take time off. According to the City Handbook, employees are currently not allowed to use their accrued annual leave until they've completed six months of continuous service, while sick leave may be used after three months of continuous service. The proposal would make both annual and sick leave available for the employee's use the first day of the month after the leave is earned.

A third change would allow an employee to use up to six weeks of earned major sick leave for the birth of the employee's biological child or for the placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly-placed child within one year of placement.

And, finally, Purdie says the City is looking to allow employees to come to the aid of a co-worker in need - "to allow employees to donate leave if another employee (who has no remaining leave) is experiencing some sort of catastrophic illness or injury."

Leave could also be donated to help an employee when a member of their immediate family is suffering from a similar illness or injury.



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