

March 4, 2011

Submitted to Bastrop Daily Enterprise and The News Star

LETTER TO THE EDITOR AND THE PEOPLE OF BASTROP:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAIN STREET -OR- WALL STREET?

OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS MUST PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF OUR CITIZENS FIRST, AND NOT WALL STREET INVESTORS.

As elected officials, the Mayor and Board Aldermen offer no apologies for putting the financial well-being of the City and the needs of its citizens first, and ahead of the financial interests of investors whose only real concern is in operating our public utilities for their own benefit.

Our citizens carry a heavy tax burden. They need more jobs, better jobs and fewer taxes. The closure of International Paper was followed by the closure of local automobile dealerships, Southern Plug, fast food restaurants and economic hardship to an untold number of other businesses. In the meantime, in the midst of all of the closures, essential city services must continue to be delivered. The cost of these services is continuing to increase. Revenues are continuing to decrease. Additional revenue has to come from some source. As a city----not a town or village, but a city -----with a population of 11,365 people, we cannot do without fire protection, police protection and basic essential services. We cannot continue our unending efforts to attract job creating businesses, like DG Foods, unless City Government secures the resources to bring to the table for business prospects.

What shall we do? Give up? Ask for additional taxes? A better solution is to identify and pursue alternate sources of revenue to fund essential services, not luxury items----without raising taxes, without depending on Baton Rouge and without depending on Washington. Public ownership of utility services, such as the public water system, is a practical and proven solution. Municipalities throughout this region, the entire state and the entire country own their own water systems.

What do we propose to do, a take-over of Peoples Water? No. Enter into the water system business and keep the profits at home? Yes. Selling water to citizens and businesses who live and operate in Bastrop is not an entitlement program that belongs to Peoples Water. The water is under the ground, beneath the City. The water is delivered through, along, over and across City-owned property, City-owned streets and public rights-of-way, after being removed from the ground beneath the City by a private, for-profit enterprise that is headquartered in Maryland.

The motive of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen is simple. Let's keep our revenue from water sales at home, since the law permits us to do so, as almost every other community in North Louisiana does, and use the money to benefit every person who lives in the City and every business that operates in the City. And while we are at it, let's regulate our own water rates, not Baton Rouge regulators and private interests. Let's protect and serve Main Street ----- a symbol for every citizen who lives in the City and our local businesses.

These are extraordinary times. Every option available to the City to replace lost revenue must be placed on the table and considered.

The City, as a municipality, has as much right to operate a public water system for the benefit of its citizens as a private enterprise does. The City has the right to regard its citizens as investors who, in turn, have the right to benefit from the profits gained from water sales, just as Peoples Water has the right to act in the best financial interests of its shareholders.

For our elected public officials, who are their constituents? Who are the shareholders? They are our local citizens and local businesses who need essential services, not the money changers on Wall Street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty Alford-Olive". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Betty Alford-Olive, Mayor
City of Bastrop