

Port of Pascagoula approves 'conservative' budget with 1.5 percent COLA for employees

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on September 04, 2013 at 12:56 PM, updated September 04, 2013 at 2:51 PM



Betty Ann White was recognized by Port of Pascagoula leaders on Sept. 4, 2013, for her 20 years of dedicated service to the port. (April Havens/ahavens@al.com)

PASCAGOULA, Miss. -- Jackson County Port Authority commissioners this morning approved a fiscal year 2014 budget that includes a 1.5 percent cost of living adjustment for the Port of Pascagoula's 38 employees and merit raises for some.

"Our employees do a great job, and we're glad the board was able to acknowledge their hard work," Port Director Mark McAndrews said.

Commissioners also decided in a closed session to award McAndrews a 3.5 percent raise.

In the 2014 budget, about \$10.2 million has been budgeted for the operating fund, which pays for salaries and benefits, terminal expenses, facility improvement and office expenses, among other items.

Including separate funds for harbor maintenance, bond redemption, Singing River Island, industrial parks, the Bayou Casotte Water System and the Black Creek cooling facility, the budget totals about \$27 million.

"It's conservative, particularly with regard to some of the expectations and predictions of activities at the public wharves," McAndrews said, noting port activities at the public terminals are subject to fluctuations due to world markets.

About \$7.5 million will go into the harbor maintenance fund, which covers items such as dredging activities and disposal site management.

The approved budget also includes about \$2 million for industrial parks and \$3 million for activities on Singing River Island.

About \$3.6 million will also go to run the Bayou Casotte water supply system and \$668,000 to run the Black Creek cooling facility, documents show.

Also at Wednesday's board meeting, commissioners:

- Revised Port Tariff Rule 420 to reflect a change in state law that now limits the liability of pilots, under certain circumstances,

to \$5,000 for damage or loss caused during performance of their duties. The new state law went into effect July 1.

- Agreed to give \$55,000 per year to the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation's capital campaign for the next five years, for a total commitment of \$275,000. The pledge is typically renewed every five years, McAndrews said.
- Recognized Betty Ann White for 20 years of dedicated service to the port. White serves as manager of government affairs and public relations.

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