

Major repairs, improvements in the works at marina, harbor



The Biloxi Small Craft Harbor is in line for millions of dollars of repairs.

Work is expected to begin within 60 to 90 days on a city project that could see as much as \$10 million in improvements at Point Cadet Marina and the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor.

The city has obtained permits to dredge the marina and harbor to depths of 10 to 12 feet, and plans to install concrete piers at the small craft harbor and slightly reconfigure a pier at Point Cadet Marina to allow the facility to accommodate larger vessels.

New electrical systems will be installed at Point Cadet and the small craft harbor. Electrical transformers will be elevated to FEMA's advisory elevations.

"We'd talked about upgrading our marinas and harbors before the hurricane," Mayor A.J. Holloway said, "and with this project, we're going to be able to bring them back better than they were before."

The work, which should be complete by Thanksgiving 2007, is the first phase of restoring city-owned, storm-ravaged harbors, piers and boat ramps.

"This harbor and marina project has been a time-consuming process because it required coordination and approvals from FEMA, MEMA, Mississippi Power, the Department of Marine Resource and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers," Holloway said. "But the paperwork and necessary approvals have all been obtained at this point. We went out for bids in January, and hope to begin working shortly."

Before Katrina, the city's harbors and marina provided more than 500 boat slips – 425 for recreational vessels and 87 commercial slips.

Wink Engineering is designing the bid packages and specifications for the Point Cadet and small craft

harbor improvements.

At Point Cadet Marina, where work could cost between \$3.5 million to \$5 million, Pier C, which is the third pier from the eastern end, will be shortened to allow vessels of more than 60 feet to use Piers B and D.

At the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor, where repairs could have a price tag between \$3 million to \$4.5 million, all slips will be re-configured, using concrete to replace the destroyed wooden piers.

As part of the Small Craft Harbor work, after dredging is complete, a new bait shop and fuel dock will be constructed.

A bid package for improvements at the Commercial Harbor, which adjoins the small craft harbor, is being prepared now and is expected to be out for bid in the first quarter of 2007.

City begins restoration of key municipal facilities



Artist's rendering of Lighthouse Park and Visitors Center

The city has projects either underway or in the works to restore three key municipal facilities: the Visitors Center, the Biloxi City Cemetery and the Biloxi Community Center.

Biloxi City Cemetery

Work is now underway on the oldest and most storm-ravaged section of the oldest landmarks in the city, the Biloxi City Cemetery.

The \$300,000 project will see repairs made to more than 200 headstones and 10 tombs in the beachfront cemetery. Dozens of gravesites, some dating back to the early 1800s, were ravaged by Hurricane Katrina on Aug. 29.

The city for months has been coordinating approvals with FEMA, MEMA and with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. FEMA gave its final approval in March.

The work, says Mayor A.J. Holloway, represents the restoration of an area that historians believe could date back to the 1700s.

The new work – which will be performed by low-bidder Kenneth R. Thompson Builder of Greenwood

and is expected to be completed in 180 days – will focus on repairs to a 200 square-foot section of the cemetery, the area facing U.S. 90, where a new brick and wrought iron fence will be replaced.

"The Biloxi City Cemetery is one of the oldest landmarks in our city," Mayor A.J. Holloway said. "Graves there date back to the early 1800s and some historians maintain that burials took place there as far back at the 1700s. This is an important part of our history, and, like so many things, it will be an important part of our future."

The process to begin the restoration of the cemetery actually began months ago, with the city publishing a full-page legal notice in an attempt to locate owners of plots or family members of those buried in the cemetery.

You can see the notice, along with pre- and post-Katrina photographs of the damaged area of the cemetery, on the city's web site at biloxi.ms.us.

Biloxi Community Center

A \$2.3 million project to restore the storm-ravaged Biloxi Community Center by the end of 2007 is now underway.

Renovations to the facility – which will be used as a temporary community center pending construction of a new and larger community center across Howard Avenue – will include the addition of an elevator and other improvements.

Long-term, the facility will house the city's Senior Citizens programming, which had been hosted at an east Biloxi facility destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

Biloxi Visitors Center at Lighthouse Park

The city also has plans to construct a new Visitors Center as part of a Lighthouse Park site north of the Biloxi Lighthouse.

The new Visitors Center, which would replace the Katrina-destroyed center that had been located on the Town Green, would be a 25,300-square-foot facility that bears a striking resemblance to another Coast landmark, Beauvoir: The Last Home of Jefferson Davis.

The Visitors Center would be the focal point of a Lighthouse Park project that could cost as much as \$10.5 million, which includes property acquisition. The majority of the funding would be reimbursed by the state and federal governments.