

Chokwe Antar Lumumba, Mayor
City of Jackson, Mississippi
Office: 601.960.1084
www.jacksonms.gov



Justin Vicory
Executive Writer
Office of the Mayor
Office: 601.960.0462
Cell: 601.502.6458
jvicory@jacksonms.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2021

Response from Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba to Press Release in Recent Garbage Contract Dispute

(JACKSON, Miss) – I feel compelled to issue the following comments after the release of a statement this afternoon. It concerns the City Council’s decision earlier in the day to rescind my emergency order. More importantly, it is directly related to something every Jackson resident and business has a say in: our garbage collection contract and how we operate as city leaders.

In the statement, which was released to the media without my knowledge, council President Virgi Lindsay explains the council’s decision earlier in the day to rescind my local emergency order.

At the same time, Lindsay – and the council members who voted with her, now seem to have come to an agreement with Waste Management, the current garbage collection operator whose contract is set to expire at the end of September.

She writes in her statement that the current vendor has offered to continue their services through, at least, the month of October. She then suggests the council is waiting on me to accept the proposal and present it back to the council.

I want to make a couple things clear: In an attempt at negotiations, Waste Management never offered a short-term contract or the proposed one-month solution that councilwoman Lindsay speaks of. When my office offered them a one-year contract, they turned it down. Instead, they demanded a long-term one, and this occurred repeatedly.

“It is economically unfeasible for Waste Management to enter into a one-year contract for the services requested in the RFP (request for proposals) for the reasons articulated by Waste Management in its two meetings with the City,” the company said in an Aug. 30 letter that was emailed to my office.

This forced me to declare a local emergency order, since their contract is set to expire, and to find a company that could fill the gap as a public safety crisis looms. Instead of reaching out to my office, they have decided to use this pressure as leverage to force the city into a long-term contract. The most recent proposed option stated in Councilwoman Lindsay’s memo is only now offered after the city managed to find an emergency solution.

It should also be noted Waste Management left us with no other options than to declare an emergency in the first place, as no contract has been approved by the City Council, leaving the city to face the possibility of no garbage collection in a matter of weeks.

Looking forward, I want to quickly point out two major problems with the councilwoman's memo: One, the negotiations between Lindsay and those who voted with her, are outside the council's purview as members of the legislative branch. More importantly, I am now legally prohibited under state law from giving Waste Management any contract – unless it is under either the bid process or a declared emergency.

Rather than selecting the company that received the highest recommendation from an independent review committee, FCC Environmental Services, a majority of the council decided in two separate votes to deny the contract. And they have now restricted the administration from finding another solution that suits the best interest of our city. This is the very definition of contract steering.

A majority of the council – in their apparent zeal to side with Waste Management – has put my office in an impossible situation.

I will address this matter in more detail in the coming days, but I want the residents of Jackson to know the full story. Waste Management appears to be calling the shots and the council is working with the company to give the appearance they are negotiating in good faith.

The ball is now in their hands.

- Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba

###