

Statement

February 2, 2009



Councilmember-at-Large Fielkow Statement
Re: Enhanced French Quarter Sanitation Services

New Orleans, LA - February 2nd, 2009 - The following is a statement issued today from New Orleans City Council Vice President Arnie Fielkow regarding the 2009 budget issue:

"It is truly regrettable that the question of providing enhanced sanitation services to the French Quarter is still being debated. The City Council has expressed for several months the absolute need for this service to be maintained for the benefit of both our local citizens and tourists. This was provided for in the budget passed by the City Council on December 1, 2008, confirmed in the Council's override of the Mayor's veto two weeks later and reconfirmed in the final budget passed by the Council on January 12, 2009. Following this January 12th Council vote, the Mayor publicly supported the final budget passed by the Council.

It makes no business sense to eliminate such a service when it has been a huge success story for this city post-Katrina and the fact that the French Quarter and other downtown areas generate in excess of one third (1/3) of city revenue. It is this city revenue which funds services to the rest of the community. This position is further strengthened by the fact that we are about to enter a high-tourism season, with literally thousands of guests coming from throughout the U.S. and around the world to Mardi Gras. The City Council is the one entity which has consistently advocated for these enhanced services and continues to do so today.

The public should understand that the funds needed to provide these enhanced services, based upon the Mayor's position the past several days, represents less than one half (1/2) of one (1) percent of the city's general fund budget. I call upon the Mayor to do what is necessary contractually to immediately put in place, and fund, these necessary enhanced sanitation services.

There has been much discussion over the past several days about identifying an alternate revenue source to pay for these enhanced sanitation services. I believe that the fiscally sound budget passed by this City Council on January 12th, which provided for the enhanced sanitation services, should be honored and respected by the Mayor. Alternatively, and in the spirit of avoiding a protracted legal fight which is not in the best interests of our citizens, I would be supportive of either additional cuts from other discretionary budgeted areas or usage of revenue from the pre-Katrina Economic Development Fund (EDF).

If the latter, it is my hope and expectation that the Mayor will continue to support the other major initiative also being funded through the EDF, namely the creation of a public-private partnership to handle the city's economic development efforts going forward. This is a project which has been in planning for over two years and one that the Mayor has consistently expressed his support, both publicly and privately. The Mayor's unequivocal commitment to this initiative was further expressed in his State of the City address last spring. Any withdrawal of such support would be both disingenuous and highly detrimental to New Orleans citizens and businesses.

It is time today that we conclude the debate on the enhanced sanitation services and I am prepared to cast my support as stated above."

New Orleans City Council

The New Orleans City Council is the legislative branch of New Orleans city government. The Council considers and enacts all local laws that govern the City of New Orleans. The Council also approves the operating and capital budgets for the City, as recommended by the mayor, and continually monitors revenues and expenditures for local government operations. The City Council is also the regulatory body for public utilities. It also reviews and has final say on many land use and zoning matters, as well as considers major economic development projects for the City. As a Board of Review for Orleans Parish, the Council examines appeals of property tax assessments for real estate taxes, and certifies tax rolls to the Louisiana Tax Commission. Other responsibilities of the Council include overseeing the operation of the public access television in Orleans Parish.

The City Council is comprised of five districts and two councilmembers-at-large. Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson; Council Vice-President and Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow ; District "A" Councilmember Shelley Midura; District "B" Councilmember Stacy S. Head; District "C" Councilmember James Carter; District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell; and District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis.