

CITY OF SHREVEPORT

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PRESS RELEASE

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Judges Throws Out Water Suit Defamation Claims Against Mayor and CAO

Judge Craig Marcotte, of the First Judicial District Court in Caddo Parish, dismissed the defamation claims today against Mayor Ollie Tyler and CAO Brian Crawford which were filed in March by Attorney Jerry Harper on behalf of Scott Pernici and Michael Wainwright. Pernici and Wainwright were ordered to pay all the attorneys' fees incurred by the City to defend this suit.

The Court found Mayor Tyler and CAO Crawford exercised their constitutional First Amendment rights of free speech when they commented on the water billing issues. The Court also stated the water matters were issues of public concern, and Mayor Tyler and CAO Crawford were not liable for damages to the plaintiffs.

"We are pleased at the outcome of the ruling, and that the Court recognized the important freedoms granted by the First Amendment," said Mayor Tyler. "This administration is committed to addressing issues in the Water and Sewerage Department. We will continue defending the related lawsuits and pursuing our outstanding claims against Systems and Software."

The City of Shreveport filed a lawsuit in Caddo Parish District Court last month against its water billing provider, Systems & Software Inc. The City is demanding payment for under-billed water and sewer revenue, which it believes resulted from various errors, including those made in programming the tiered water rates in the City's billing system in 2014.

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