



Text Size:

Wednesday, Jun 17, 2009

Posted on Tue, Jun. 16, 2009

FEMA trailers get 6 more months

By MARY PEREZ

BILOXI — Those in Biloxi still living in FEMA travel trailers have six more months to move but must immediately show the city they are working toward finding permanent housing.

By a unanimous vote Tuesday the council approved the extension.

Community Development Director Jerry Creel recommended the trailers be removed in 60 days, before the height of the hurricane season.

Creel said 41 FEMA trailers remain in the city. “Of those 14 are actively working on their homes and 27 have taken no action whatsoever.”

In three cases, Creel said the owners are back in their homes and are renting the FEMA trailers still on their lots.

“Without a deadline there is no sense of urgency and the longer we wait, the more complacent people become,” he said.

Before the meeting Councilman Bill Stallworth and representatives from advocate groups across the Coast held a press conference at the trailer of Chuck Rogers on Redding Street.

“It just takes time to get things organized,” said Rogers, who plans to build a small house on the lot where his home was destroyed in Katrina. He purchased a travel trailer to replace his FEMA trailer before he learned homes in Biloxi must withstand winds of 140 miles per hour.

Charmel Gaulden, director of Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center, said a few people may be taking advantage of the free government trailers but most have had trouble getting money to rebuild, or can't pay the high rents.

Stallworth told the council everyone still in FEMA trailers has been assigned a case worker and must develop a recovery plan.

From the thousands of FEMA trailers after the storm, “we're moving in the right direction,” said Stallworth. Biloxi Housing Authority is opening additional apartments, and he said some of the renters are awaiting Section 8 housing vouchers from the federal stimulus spending.

Councilman George Lawrence challenged the more than two dozen advocates who came to the council meeting, “Check out the 27 people and what kind of help they need. Let's all stand up and try to help them.”