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Monday,
October 11, 2004

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LOLIS ERIC ELIE

City driving in circles on road repairs

In October 2001, then-Mayor Marc Morial claimed he had done more to improve the streets of New Orleans than any modern mayor.

He noted that after being elected in 1994, he persuaded voters to support a \$172 million bond issue to pay for various capital improvements including street repairs. Under the slogan "Rebuild New Orleans Now!" the Morial administration in 1995 earmarked about \$51 million for rebuilding major streets and about \$49 million for rebuilding minor streets.

Under the slogan "Save Our Streets" in 2001, the administration announced that an additional \$12.7 million would be spent resurfacing 100 streets.

It's difficult not to see that last announcement in the broader context of Morial's effort to convince voters that they would be better off if he were allowed to run for a third term.

For citizens whose primary concern is the quality of our streets, the defeat of Morial's third-term initiative may have been a disappointment. But, as it turns out, it was only a temporary disappointment.

Last week's announcement by Mayor Ray Nagin's administration indicates that the priorities emanating from City Hall are little changed.

New mayor, old route

Last week Nagin outlined what he intends to do if voters support his \$260 million bond issue on Nov. 2. The lion's share of the money, \$163 million, will be used for street repairs.

For the purposes of this column, I am not interested in whether Morial or Nagin is the better mayor. What strikes me here is simply the predictable sameness that defines our political system.

In many ways Nagin earned a reputation as the anti-Morial candidate and the anti-Morial mayor. He constantly talked about alleged corruption under his predecessor's watch. He even talked about the inefficiencies in Morial's efforts to spend money on street repairs. Much of the money Morial had raised for streets, Nagin has said, was unspent when Morial left office.

There can be little doubt that Morial partisans think Nagin is their nemesis. I had a recent encounter with a friend of the former mayor's who shuddered at the prospect that a Nagin-backed candidate might win an election. But the question I think we need to raise is whether Nagin's election has resulted in any significant shifting of priorities.

The roads not traveled

Having twice damaged automobiles as a result of our poor streets, I understand that we need to repair our roads.

But what bothers me is the lack of a debate over whether improved streets are really the No. 1 problem facing the city. Is there a City Council member or mayoral hopeful who might think the \$163 million would be better spent on education, flood preparedness or poverty eradication? It seems that the street repair lobby has so total a grip on our city's government that the rest of us are given little choice but to funnel more money into its coffers.

Though we may not have permanent mayors, it seems we do have permanent priorities.

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High-rise pileup kills one; 10 are injured

14 vehicles involved, including 18-wheeler

By Sarah Brown
Staff writer

A 14-vehicle pile-up on the rain-slicked Interstate 10 high-rise bridge early Sunday killed a Jefferson Parish woman, sent as many as 10 people to the hospital and tied up traffic until nearly noon, police said.

Letita Aggrey, 27, died at the scene from injuries in the

wreck, Orleans Parish coroner's spokesman John Gagliano said. The identities of the injured people are unknown. All were sent to Charity Hospital after the accident.

The 14-vehicle accident, which included an 18-wheeler, occurred in the westbound I-10

lanes on the down slope of the Industrial Canal crossing about 4:15 a.m., police spokesman Sgt. Paul Accardo said.

High winds and rain from Tropical Storm Matthew may have contributed to the accident and also hampered authorities, who were still investigating the

incident Sunday.

I-10 was closed for more than seven hours, with traffic diverted to the Morrison Road exit and Chef Menteur Highway.

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MATTHEW MAKES A MESS



STAFF PHOTOS BY CHUCK COOK

Matthew Fisher videotapes the flooded Tchefuncte River in Madisonville on Sunday. Usually, the river's edge is at the two pilings.

Tropical Storm Matthew, which came ashore Sunday near Houma, had enough gusto to send Lake Pontchartrain over the floodwall in Mandeville and throw a wet blanket over the New Orleans area.



Brent McCarron of Mandeville floats above Lakeshore Drive in Mandeville on Sunday after Lake Pontchartrain poured over the floodwall.

\$250,000 budgeted for bond campaign

Money to go for ads to 'educate' public

By Bruce Egger
Staff writer

New Orleans city government may be chronically short of money, but the City Council and Mayor Ray Nagin's administration have decided its budget can

be stretched far enough to cover a \$250,000 "educational campaign" about the \$260 million bond issue voters will be asked to approve Nov. 2.

By law, public money cannot be spent on ads urging the electorate to vote for a bond issue, but it can be used to educate the public about what improvements such an issue would pay for. In practice, there often is little difference between the two types of ads.

The Nagin administration had asked the council to appropriate \$100,000 to pay for an educational campaign about the Nov. 2 bond issue, which would finance \$138 million in street repairs plus renovations to dozens of public buildings, playgrounds and other facilities.

But under the prodding of council President Eddie Sapir, and with the agreement of top administration officials, the council decided Thursday to in-

crease the amount to \$250,000. The vote was 6-0.

Bright Moments, an advertising and public relations firm led by Bill Rouselle, was scheduled to run the \$100,000 campaign. Sapir said the council wants to be involved in planning the campaign and might want to get another firm involved as well, but he mentioned no names.

Entergy New Orleans exec-

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HISTORY RIDES ON

Louisiana gets back stolen Civil War saddle

By Steve Cannizaro
St. Bernard/Plaquemines bureau

PG.T. Beauregard, Confederate general, superintendent of the military academy at West Point just before the Civil War and afterward head of the state militia now known as the Louisiana National Guard, never forgot his roots.

When Beauregard, born in St. Bernard Parish in May 1818, had a pigskin saddle made in Paris in 1862, the state seal of

Louisiana was affixed to a breast strap and bridle for his horse.

It is unclear whether Beauregard, whose statue stands at the main entrance to City Park in New Orleans, ever got to use the fancy saddle; it was captured that year by a Union blockade on the Mississippi River. But now through June, the public can see it on display at the museum of the Jackson Barracks National Guard base

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STAFF PHOTO BY CHRIS GRANGER

Captain Commanding William J. O'Brien, left, and 1st Lt. Daniel May, members of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, gather around the saddle of General P.G.T. Beauregard that they lent to the Jackson Barracks Military Museum.

2 N.O. men die, 1 injured in attacks

Police seeking leads in separate shootings

By Sarah Brown
Staff writer

Two New Orleans men were killed and one wounded in two separate shootings Saturday, the New Orleans Police Department reported.

The first shooting occurred at approximately 9:30 p.m. in the 1200 block of South Galvez Street, said police Sgt. Paul Accardo, department spokesman.

Police arrived to find Russell Hampton, 21, lying on the ground with several gunshot wounds. Hampton was pronounced dead on the scene.

The second shooting, which left Joseph Edward, 22, dead, and an unidentified 21-year-old injured, occurred just after 11:30 p.m. in the 1400 block of Robert E. Lee Boulevard.

The name of the injured man is being withheld for security reasons, Accardo said.

The victims were driving eastbound in a sport utility vehicle on Robert E. Lee when a black pickup truck drove alongside and the occupant or occupants began firing at the car, investigators said. Edward, who was driving, died on the scene; his passenger was transported to Charity Hospital.

His condition is not known.

Police are asking anyone with information in either killing to call Crimestoppers at (504) 822-1111. Callers don't have to give their names to be eligible for a reward of up to \$2,500 for information leading to an indictment.

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UPDATE

Newsmakers revisited

LSU, Tulane combine medical expertise

FEB. 13, 2003: University medical centers build on teamwork; Canal Street building to be center for cancer research

By John Pope
Staff writer

Construction of its home isn't scheduled to start until next year, but the cancer center that will unify the talents of Louisiana State and Tulane universities is already active in New Orleans' medical district.

"We have an agenda that includes recruitment of people,

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