



CEDRIC B. GLOVER
MAYOR

ROD RICHARDSON
Director of Communications

505 Travis Street Suite 200
Shreveport, Louisiana 71101
Tel. 318.673.5008
Fax. 318.673.5099
Cell. 318.525.7039

rod.richardson@shreveportla.gov

PRESS RELEASE

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Mayor supports new location and end to dog-park lawsuit

The latest attempt to end the gridlock over establishing Shreveport's first dog park stalled today after councilmembers rejected Mayor Cedric Glover's request to rescind a flawed resolution that is the basis of a pending lawsuit against him.

A City Council subcommittee studying options for the dog park is offering a compromise that will be placed on the Dec. 20 agenda. That resolution authorizes the Mayor to sign an agreement with the Red River Waterway Commission to use \$280,130 to construct a dog park along the Red River near Stoner Avenue. The RRWC approved the funding last year to build a dog park at Charles and Marie Hamel's Park.

Additionally, the new proposal states that if the Mayor signs an agreement for a dog park at the Stoner location, Resolution No. 133 of 2012 will be repealed. This resolution, however, can only be introduced on Dec. 20 but cannot be adopted until next month.

Mayor Glover has always maintained that several elements of Resolution No. 133 of 2012, which forces him to sign an agreement accepting the funding from the RRWC for the Hamel's location, along with any additional costs that would accompany construction at that site, are unreasonable.

Resolution No. 133 is problematic because:

- It includes unprecedented language that "requires" instead of "authorizes" the Mayor to sign an agreement. This directive essentially removes the executive discretion needed to ensure the best interests of the City will be met, Mayor Glover said.
- It also obligates the City of Shreveport to supply any additional construction costs above the \$280,130 awarded.
- It makes no provisions for the engineering and design costs associated with the Hamel's Park construction.
- It establishes a vague reimbursement process for the City to follow, essentially making the City assume responsibility for all the upfront costs to design and build the dog park, while awaiting reimbursement at the discretion of the RRWC.

Construction estimates for a dog park at Hamel's range from \$580,000 to \$690,000.



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Mayor Glover vetoed that legislation and was later sued by the Shreveport Dog Park Alliance, which seeks to have him accept the funding for a dog park at Hamel's Park. A state judge sided with the alliance and the case is being appealed.

"We're here today because 133 is a fatally flawed piece of legislation based on incomplete, inaccurate and bad information that opens the door to substantial financial exposure which is not in the best interest of the City of Shreveport," Mayor Glover said. "No one on the council has put forth any ideas by which we can move forward with a dog park at Hamel's and yet you want to continue to hold 133 like a sword not just over my head, but also to hold the City hostage. To me, that makes no sense."

Various councilmembers have told Mayor Glover that they would not have supported No. 133 had they been aware of its flawed premise. However, there was no obvious sentiment expressed today to support his resolution to rescind it. That proposal is also on the Council's Dec. 20 agenda.

Councilman Michael Corbin stated that if the Mayor wants to end the lawsuit, he can sign No. 133 and then let the Council be responsible for the potential fallout that might come as a result. Corbin also said Mayor Glover should have made it known that these flaws existed before the Council voted unanimously to accept the money from the RRWC.

For his part, Mayor Glover said it was incumbent upon councilmembers to fully research the proposal and ask pertinent questions about it before voting to support a bad deal presented by one of their colleagues and staff.

"What you have here is a group of nice folks who are good at making their case for what they want, and I'm the only thing standing between their special interests to pursue this project on their terms and what's actually in the best interest of the City of Shreveport," Mayor Glover said.

The City has an established plan to work with the Red River Waterway Commission on riverfront projects. Typically, the City makes a formal pitch to the RRWC and then once it's approved, the Commission takes the lead role to hire and pay the bid-winning engineering and construction teams. Upon completion, the City accepts the responsibility to operate and maintain the facility.

Mayor Glover contends this system works well and eliminates any potential financial exposure the City might have if a project runs over budget. In this instance, representatives from the dog park alliance, City Council and Caddo Parish successfully lobbied the RRWC for funding. Neither the Mayor's Office nor city staff was part of that effort.

CITY OF SHREVEPORT



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To further indicate his determination to resolve this stalemate, Mayor Glover shared a letter he sent today to the Commission, seeking action on two items at its Dec. 18 meeting:

- First, the Mayor is asking the Commission to use grant funds previously committed to Hamel's Park to be reassigned to the Stoner location.
- Next, he wants the Commission to consider managing the construction of the dog park, thus ensuring the improvements meet the specifications of the RRWC and the City.

“We have spent far too much time on this one issue when there are far more pressing and substantive issues that we need to be addressing in a serious manner,” Mayor Glover said.

“We need to come together and move in another direction and not keep this bad legislation hanging over my head as part of any impetus to move us forward.”

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www.shreveportla.gov
[Twitter.com/MayorGlover](https://twitter.com/MayorGlover)
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