

Slumlord Summer

Imagine stepping into a grand chateau: a sprawling estate, furnished with ornate fountains, lush gardens, and dedicated groundskeepers—a portrait of a palace fit for royalty. The Grand Chateau Apartments of West Capitol Street, however, is much like stepping into a state of emergency.

Picture this: craterous potholes riddling the only pathway in or out, a central courtyard with grass so overgrown it's to your shoulders, countless blackened piles of burnt trash, a flood stream from a busted pipe, crumbling stairwells and hazardous breezeways, and a population of roaming strays.

The residents of the Grand Chateau Apartments need not imagine, as this landscape of rust and ruin has been their reality for some time now. In fact, according to residents, their crisis began with years of negligent property management, and reached its cruel climax this summer.

This past summer, power was shut off at the apartments. The culprit, Entergy Mississippi, claimed to have discovered evidence of meter tampering. Entergy, citing safety issues, disconnected power, leaving residents without electricity or warning. So, after a day of labor and trying to survive the already brutal summer heat, residents were instantly faced with stacked odds. Many arrived home to no lights or A/C, rising temperatures, and fridges stocked with rapidly spoiling food and medicine alike. Within days of this occurrence, the building was deemed unsafe for habitation, leaving residents in an impossibly urgent housing crisis, one deserving of an equally urgent response and resolution.

On the Ground

Help for the residents of the Grand Chateau apartments came first, from the hands of the community. Many showed up and offered as much assistance as possible by providing supplies and helping relocate residents to temporary shelter. Some of the helpers present were touted by the media: Councilwoman Tina Clay, Stewpot, and The Society of St. Vincent De Paul. But many more went completely unreported. These helpers include the local socialist orgs such as DSA and PSL as well as other local community activists. The Watchdogs were among the first to respond and provide support and get info as soon as we found out.

The Mayor himself, who was barely involved, disappeared when the cameras stopped rolling. One resident was hospitalized due to heat exhaustion. She was forced to walk back from the ER after being discharged from the hospital and was later not provided any transportation to get to a critical doctor's appointment. Another resident has had to postpone a necessary surgery for months due to unstable housing post-operation.

The city claims to have handled it but clearly dropped the ball, leaving some to slip through the cracks.

For instance, a tent with air conditioning and cots was constructed, but some residents report never even being told about it. City officials touted Stewpot as their closest partner, but when we followed a tenant through the system, the only thing Stewpot provided was money AFTER expecting the person in need to pay for application fees and drive themselves to view potential units. Most residents we spoke to had no car or phone. They were provided no list of potential complexes. It seemed like they were left completely on their own to come up with something that had a slim chance.

These applications are likely to be denied because the person in need often doesn't have an income. So the shelter becomes their only option. The kicker here is that there are so many rules and regulations to abide by, that it's nearly impossible to stay there without breaking at least some rules. This inevitably spits people right back out onto the street.

It's immediately clear that the system and procedures currently in place are failing our most vulnerable neighbors.

Systems at Play

And if that wasn't enough there are currently 3 other complexes going through the exact same thing right now. Imagine everything we just reported times 4. Stratford Apartments, Addison Place, and Blossom Apartments are all in a state of emergency from the utility company cutting services due to the landlord not paying their bills. In every case, the city has agreed this is unacceptable and made an attempt to make up for their own shortcomings. In every case those attempts have been tragic mishandlings of innocent people's lives, leading to worse conditions than they were in before.

How can the city allocate millions of dollars to corridor improvement and folk festivals when they can't even provide bags of ice to the people who need it most? In reality, it was the work of a half dozen community members buying groceries, motel rooms, Lyfts, and coordinating appointments. Now most of those residents are facing long-term instability, housing insecurity, unemployment, and ongoing health complications.

The city should have fined the landlord for allowing the building to get that bad. The landlord should have properly evicted tenants and not let their building rot and decay. Someone should be following the outcomes of the "solutions" we provide to see if they're actually working and not making things even worse. None of this was done.

Homeward JXN

On September 1st, the city's Unhoused Task Force held a community meeting with local rehoming programs to talk about the overall plan and direction for Homeward JXN.

Homeward JXN is the name given to the program that is supposed to clean up encampments and find long-term housing and rehabilitation services. It is being directed by "Clutch Consulting Group" who has done work in many cities around the country advising and supporting programs like these. This meeting was the first step in a 2-year program to use public and private funds to find a new and lasting solution to the unhoused crisis. The plan aims to provide 12 months of rental assistance and health services for anyone they identify as a candidate. Anyone else, well, they're likely to be arrested if they don't pack up and move.

The cold messaging of these proposed encampment cleanups and the utilization of stricter enforcement appear indicative of Homeward fumbling in the first few yards. Where is the trust-building phase? Doesn't this strict enforcement simply criminalize those who are already victims of neglect by the city?

The program did have some upsetting language around clearing away encampments such as having "closing teams" and sounding more focused on making people disappear than getting the help they need.

It's been over a month since the start of the program and Watchdogs have not heard or seen of any encampment sweeps or services provided as of yet. In fact, after checking in with one of the partner organizations, Stewpot, it was found that they haven't even started a referral process for people to sign up for rehousing. Whether or not they'll be able to organize all of the services is still to be determined. We'll be watching and reporting along the way.

City Council

History Repeats

A recent City Council meeting got off to an interesting start when Foote and Stokes proposed an amendment that would get the city sued for not paying its bills. TYPICAL. Foote and Stokes voted to not pay because they didn't like the price of the new buses. Even after they found out they already received them. Thankfully everybody else voted to pay the bill and moved on.

City Council Aims to Gamble Away Green Spaces

Recently the city council proposed a plan to build a resort casino on Belhaven Beach. This requires the city to reclassify the land as surplus land, which the city can then sell. They said they would only sell if the developers can get a \$1 billion dollar resort casino approved. The city hopes for a jackpot of millions, but we already know the odds.

The city has proposed similar legislation throughout the decades like the D1-One Lake Project, but it continues to be shot down because it's a misuse of funds, unpopularity with Jackson residents, as well as being environmentally devastating and does not help flooding like they promise

The council also passed an agreement with a brand new non-profit that plans to do exactly what the D1-One Lake project aims to do. The first attempt was done under the "Rankin-Hinds Flood Control District." Mayor Horhn said "This project will go through whether we get the Rankin-Hinds Flood Control District to fruition."

The D1-One Lake project would scrape and dredge 9 miles of Pearl River expanse to turn the river into something more like a drainage ditch. They also want to put a huge dam near Lefleur's Bluff State Park and ignore the fact that the dam "does not provide any flood control benefits" (2025 USACE RDEIS, Appendix I, p.36). So why do it? Why allocate all this money for property development when we have crumbling streets and caved-in houses just 5 miles away? Your guess is as good as ours.

Making this land available to luxury developers has always been the plan and the mayor confirmed it by saying "we're working with investors who are still tinkering with the idea of building a resort... Things like hotels, restaurants, residences." Stokes won't stop talking about building a casino. This is the opposite of public green space, it's a cash grab to line the pockets of any politician that'll sign off on it. And you can bet security will be kicking people out of whatever park space is left if you don't fit their model of an upstanding citizen.

Data Center Locations

Another item was an agreement to explore potential data center locations. The city recently became the belle of the ball when the AI developers drew their eye upon the untapped potential of Jackson's fertile land. Watchdog reporters were at every meeting as out-of-state developers tried to re-zone farmland so they could build a data center right next to West Jackson neighborhoods. Thanks to community push-back there was a pause and now they want to figure out where to put one. Stokes says "We got to protect the people" and then suggested Hawkins Field, a small airport in the center of 7 different neighborhoods. Grizzell said wait a minute. "I do have a community that sits at the end of those runways...I've called other municipalities also, nobody has yet to be able to show me a payout, we're operating on a bunch of promises."

Stokes replies "They put the garbage folks over there. Those people didn't want garbage trucks but it's there. So why can't we put something else that people want to make money with?" I encourage readers to answer Mr. Stokes directly. His office number is 601-960-1090.

Calendar

10/20:

- Autumn Yoga in the Welty Garden | 5:30pm | 1109 Pinehurst St (Eudora Welty House & Garden)
- JXN Roller Derby Bootcamp (also 10/27, 11/3, 11/10) | 7pm - 9pm | 300 MS-468 Brandon, MS

10/22:

- Live Jazz in the Welty Garden | 5pm | 1119 Pinehurst St (Eudora Welty House and Garden)
- Ghosts in the Garden Storytime | 3pm | 1119 Pinehurst St (Eudora Welty House and Garden)
- Data Center Community Forum | 10am-12pm | 101 Capitol St. (JSU Downtown Campus)

10/23:

- Emo Karaoke Night | 8pm | 200 Commerce St. (Hal n Mal's)

10/24:

- ChicagoSippian | 4pm - 8pm | 620 Briarwood Dr (Briarwood Presbyterian Church)
- Pumpkin Adventure at the Ag Museum | \$12 | 9am - 3pm | 1150 Lakeland Dr (Ag Museum)

10/29:

- Zine Club | 6pm - 8pm | 826 North St. (Urban Foxes)

10/31:

- HALNMALOWEEN | 8pm - 2am | 200 Commerce St. (Hal n Mal's)
- Bellhaven Boo | 5:30pm - 8pm | Block of Belvoir Place
- Hallowubz | 9pm | 214 South State St. (Martin's)
- Dia de los Muertos | 10am - 6:30pm | 406 W Fortification Street (Immigrant Alliance for Justice & Equity)
- Trunk or Treat | 4pm - 6pm | 614 Briarwood Dr (Briarwood Arts Center)
- Late Night with Rita Brent Finale | 8pm - 11:30pm | 105 E Pascagoula St. (Jackson Convention Complex)
- Fall Family Day | 10am - 3pm | 222 North St. | Two Mississippi Museums
- Boo at the Zoo | \$8 | 2pm - 6pm | 2918 W Capitol St. | Jackson Zoo

Contributors

Slumlord Summer: Pluto, Weimaraner, Mastiff

Homeward JXN: Pluto, Weimaraner, Mastiff

City Council: K-9, Pluto

This edition is supported by:

Haha!

Yes!

TKAM!

IMPROV | JACKSON, MS

Aaaand

To Kick a Mockingbird - JXN's improv comedy troupe!

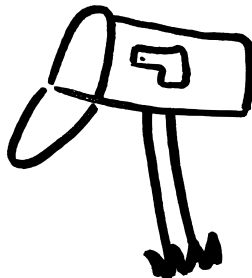
Open practices, ages 18+
Mondays, 7pm at MS Arts Center

For inquiries, interest, and information, visit @tkam_improv
on instagram or email 2kickamockingbird@gmail.com

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A people's paper.

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