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Fifteen-year-old memories still strong in the minds of coastal residents

By Lindy Sholes

Anyone who lived along the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 2005 can tell you where they were and how they spent the harrowing six hours of pounding wind, rain and rising waters delivered by the infamous Hurricane Katrina on August 29 that year. Though Mississippians find themselves in a different kind of crisis fifteen years later, empty beach-front lots and diseased Live Oaks testify to the lasting mark Katrina left.

The effects of Katrina on coastal Mississippi often took a backseat to the destruction that occurred in New Orleans, devastating as it was. Locals jokingly refer to their state as the “landmass between New Orleans, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama,” a phrase used during a 2012 weather report on another incoming hurricane to refer to Mississippi.

There are countless Coast residents, many in Long Beach, whose lives took an unforeseen turn that day. Karen Dykes was one such person.

The registered nurse held it together until her five-year-old son burst with excitement over seeing a real bed, making snow angels in the blankets. It was then that the realities of Hurricane Katrina’s



The Dkys hold up before and after pictures of their former Long Beach home, destroyed by Hurricane Katrina fifteen years ago this month.

Photo by Lindy Sholes

aftermath struck her heart.

Karen and her husband David, a pharmacist, spent their first fifteen years of

marriage setting aside money for retirement, building a comfortable cushion of financial security. When they had

an unexpected pregnancy, their money was redirected to a bouncing blonde baby boy, Eli. That fifteen years prior to his birth would prove to be their saving grace when their home was flattened by Katrina’s tidal surge and their insurance turned out to be useless.

Karen and her family had waited out the storm in a room facing the bay in David’s office building, and, from their perspective, this storm looked no worse than the occasional hurricane the Coast is used to experiencing every couple of years. She didn’t believe David when he went on an emergency run with police and returned to say they no longer had a home.

“I didn’t believe him until I saw it myself,” she said. “I knew I’d come back and we wouldn’t have electricity. That’s the only thing that came in my mind.”

She would spend the next few weeks combing through debris, trying to find anything that resembled the life they had known through August 28.

They used their savings to pay off the house that no longer existed and to put down a payment on a new home, also in Long Beach. People did what they had to do to survive.

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Long Beach voters approve Mississippi Power Franchise Agreement

By Andy Kanengiser

Voters in Long Beach, Gulfport and other Gulf Coast communities voted in favor of a franchise agreement with the Mississippi Power Company.

The vote in cities across the region on August 4 wasn’t really close at all.

In Long Beach, the tally in the special election was 355 voters in favor of the agreement and 25 residents opposed, according to Long Beach Community Affairs Director Jenny Levens.

Voting yes doesn’t raise taxes. Instead, a yes vote entitles Long Beach

and other cities to three percent of gross revenue that Mississippi Power collects from residents and businesses. But by voting no, the revenue would decrease the amount to two percent for Long Beach. It comes at a time when cities across South Mississippi are strapped for cash due to economic woes stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Special elections in early August occurred in Biloxi, Gulfport, Long Beach, Pass Christian, Ocean Springs, Pascagoula and Bay St. Louis. Across the region, there was strong voter support in favor of the

new franchise agreement with Mississippi Power.

In the City of Columbia, 96.7 percent of the voters approved the Mississippi Power franchise agreement.

Every twenty-five years, residents in Long Beach and other South Mississippi towns get the opportunity to renew the revenue amount of the franchise agreement. The funds help provide essential programs and City services.

While the special election didn’t attract a huge turnout of voters in Long Beach, the franchise agreement with Mississippi Power is significant,

City leaders say.

City of Long Beach leaders wanted to extend the partnership the community has maintained with Mississippi Power for more than a half-century.

Under this new agreement, Mississippi Power will pay Long Beach three percent of all revenues (residential, commercial and industrial) generated in the city.

Based in Gulfport, Mississippi Power serves more than 188,000 customers in twenty-three southeast Mississippi counties. The electric utility is a subsidiary of the Atlanta-based Southern Company.



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