



WE MATTER EIGHT MILE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Prichard City Council Members

Cc: Mayor Jimmie Gardener

District Attorney Keith Blackwood

Mr. Lance R. LeFleur, Director of ADEM

Sent via open letter to media outlets and email

7/3/2023

To the Prichard City Council Members McCall, Williams, Knollwood, Griffin, and Edwards,

The matter in which we write you this letter is urgent and potentially life-altering for the citizens of Prichard and Chickasaw. Per Court records, Synovus Bank bond trustee has filed a civil case against the Prichard Water and Sewer Board to get relief for non-repayment of a \$55-million-dollar bond. The lawsuit states that Prichard Water and Sewer Board is in default and has shown a complete lack of competency to run the Board and devise an executable plan to repay its debts.

In Early March of 2023, after attending an informational session at the Water Board held by then-board member John Johnson and current board member Cherry Doyle, our president Carletta Davis, and board member Teresa Bettis met and petitioned the District Attorney's office to remove the current board members for incompetence. There has been no response, nor have we been aware of any actions that occurred to address the matter.

Later in March, the association President requested that ADEM come and hear from the community regarding pressing issues involving the Water and Sewer board. Concerns were mounting over the failed infrastructure and the pending default. This request resulted in ADEM doing an availability session on April 11, 2023, to discuss all of its services and NOT to address specifically the Prichard Water and Sewer board.

On April 19, the association requested the presence of Senator Vivian Figures to address the concerns in the City of Prichard. The primary concern was the Prichard Water and Sewer Board. ADEM attended the meeting, and the Chief of Water expressed no concerns with the quality of water sold to Prichard Water and Sewer customers. Additionally, he contended that Prichard had yet to give him any indication to believe that test was not accurate. When pressed for more oversight, no clear answer was given. We Matter will hold a follow-up meeting will be held July 13.

We firmly believe that the code of Alabama by which the Prichard Water and Sewer Board was established and given authority wasn't to create tyranny. Furthermore, we do not believe it is right nor dutiful for sworn officials and oversight agencies to turn their back on the citizens of Prichard and Chickasaw to allow such tyranny to occur. The Prichard Water and Sewer Board has exemplified malfeasance and a dereliction of their duties.

Therefore, we demand that the Prichard City Council remove the current Board and appoint a new Board (made up of highly-qualified individuals) under the auspice of total incompetence and a threat to public safety. We can no longer sit idly by while our children are at risk. You must act NOW. We would like to see written qualifications put forth for Water board members, and we would like public hearings held to appoint new leadership to the Board.

In the spirit of transparency, the Council will provide ample public notification through the media and other communication outlets with the date, time, and location of the public hearings.

Due to the contract that the current board members have entered on this bond, which allows Synovus to appoint a receiver and raise the rate, the time to act is now. The rates for Prichard Water are absorbent and leave many in the dilemma of whether to pay their water bill or buy food or medicine now; if the rates go up, this problem will worsen.

We also firmly believe that the Council must do all it can to rectify this Board. The Council can no longer sit by and watch, no longer can you say you have no say, no longer can you ignore the cries from the very people that elected you to office, no longer can you say you have nothing to do with the Water board after the appointment. The people of Prichard are paying for legal minds, and we hope that our investment in those legal minds can be realized in a time such as this. Lives are at risk. We implore you to act immediately and add this to your agenda for Thursday 7/6; it is your duty to protect the public safety of the citizens.

Yours In Service,

We Matter Community Association

