

MEET THE PRESIDENT

The new Livingston Parish president and council were sworn in January 9, 2012, during a dignified ceremony in the parish council meeting chambers. The newly-installed president and council members shared their thoughts immediately following their inauguration.



"I am willing to listen to all sides of an issue, and I will serve with honor and integrity."

Layton Ricks,
Livingston Parish President

Layton Ricks takes the oath of office while swearing on a Bible held by his father (seated) as his wife looks on.

Ricks believes one of the glaring problems with parish government today is the lack of leadership in working with the parish council, saying, "It is incumbent upon us to work as a team. I will reach out in turn and

help move the parish forward in a good way. It's not an issue of 'them' and 'us,' it's about the people of the parish.

On the day of the most recent rejection of the latest

round of FEMA appeals regarding reimbursement to the parish for removal of Hurricane Gustav debris, Ricks said he met with the attorney representing the parish, and they are hoping to "turn around" the ruling and receive more funds from FEMA.

Regarding paying contractors and subcontractors if FEMA's rulings stand, Rick said, "Whether we owe people money for debris removal that FEMA deems ineligible will have to be determined. We will be reviewing the contracts with our legal representatives and will make a sound decision based on their advice. I will fight to pay or not pay the bills based on what they tell me is legally owed. But having reviewed the contracts, it seems to me that the money is owed."

Alvin Fairburn and Associates, Ricks employer up until a few weeks ago, billed \$5,267,463 for its work on the Hurricane Gustav debris program, but has not been paid, according to the appeal.

Asked how he would be able to maintain impartiality and fairness regarding this and other issues involving Fairburn, including the new council's questioning of their road engineering bills - especially since he named Alvin Fairburn, Jr. in his inauguration speech as "my good friend who stood by me and helped make this possible - Ricks said, "Time will tell. I need time to show that when dealings arise concerning Fairburn I will be impartial."

He continued, "It's not true that Alvin Fairburn and Associates gets all of the parish's engineering jobs. They don't expect to get all the jobs under my administration, and they will not get all of them. I'm friends with other engineering firms as well, and everyone will have an equal chance.

"That said, I believe that the road bill needs to be paid. It was approved by the previous council and it is owed. Regarding the issue of whether an order to proceed was issued, the council never required that before, and typically, the council has never made an issue of it even if it is in the contract. If the council wants me to start issuing a notice to proceed on contracts in the future, I'll be glad to do so, but I don't think they should apply it retroactively."

(Editor's note: Some of Ricks comments were made prior to the January 12 council meeting when he told the council he had already paid the disputed payment of \$453,000 to Alvin Fairburn and Associates. Following the meeting, Ricks acknowledged that he knew signing the check would draw criticism but felt it was necessary to "put it behind us and move forward." Asked how he could justify it as clearing out old business, when he paid the Fairburn bill yet stopped payment on a check for \$379,517 by C-Del, Corey Delahoussaye's consulting firm who revealed possible irregularities in debris removal work. Ricks said he paid the Fairburn bill because the previous council directed that it be paid, and he

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