

# Bee Creek plant breaks ground; Wastewater project will be one of largest ever in city's history

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After five years of preparation, the City of Murray broke ground Thursday for the construction of improvements to the Bee Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Murray City Councilman F.T. “Butch” Seargent opened the ceremony, saying this would be one of the largest projects taken on by the city in its history. After Seargent prayed a blessing over the site, he introduced former Murray mayor and state representative Melvin Henley — who has assisted the city on the current project — to talk about the history of the Bee Creek plant.

Henley said that after he took office as mayor in January 1978, he reviewed the plans to renovate the old wastewater treatment plant on KY 94 East, which he said “stunk to high heaven every time you drove by on the highway.” After reviewing the plans from the Pittsburgh engineering firm that had been hired by the city, Henley said he came to the conclusion that the project had been mismanaged. He said the firm’s plans to use rotating biodisc technology should have never been considered because the technology was unreliable and extremely inefficient.

Henley said he fired that engineering firm and hired GRW, which also was hired by the city in 2010 to design the new upgrade project. Henley said he and several others — including Ron Gilkerson, who is now GRW’s president — traveled around the eastern part of United States looking at wastewater treatment plants until they found one in Lackland City, Texas that Henley wanted to model Murray’s plant after. Gilkerson then worked through the necessary government agencies to get approval to build a new plant instead of renovating the old plant, which Henley said ultimately save the city about \$1.2 million.

Henley said the new project would be the third addition to the plant since it broke ground in 1982. The original plant was supposed to last 20 years based on the projected growth of Murray, but he said an addition had to be constructed about 10 years later.



## Groundbreaking ceremony

Murray Mayor Jack Rose and several Murray City Council members are joined by contractors and other local officials Thursday morning at the groundbreaking for the improvements to the Bee Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. The project is slated to be complete before the end of 2018.

“This is the third addition from 1982 to 2015, so that reflects the growth of Murray in Calloway County, which I think is indicative of the fact that we have fared better during this seven-to-eight-year downturn in the economy than most communities,” Henley said.

Murray Mayor Jack Rose thanked Murray-Calloway County Economic Development Corporation President Manning and Gene Pierceall, the plant’s chief operator. He said the city had spent \$200,000 since one of the plant’s pumps had broken, but he said the city would have been much worse off if it hadn’t been for Pierceall and his workers at the plant.

Murray-Calloway County Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Aaron Dail reiterated that the expansion of the plant is necessary because of the growth in Murray’s population and economy.

“As you can tell behind me, this is a huge operation, and more importantly, it’s huge that it happens — for us, for our businesses and for those folks looking to move to Murray. I can’t go without saying that Murray has seen a lot of growth in the past couple of years.

“A lot of that is due to our local economy and a lot of that is due to the efforts of Mark Manning and the Economic Development Corporation. One new business started every three days last year in Murray, Kentucky, so we are excited. This project will help increase that capacity so that you don’t have to worry when you flush the toilet, you don’t have to worry about anything happening and you can feel comfortable knowing that our community is at the forefront of making sure we have that building capacity.”

Gilkerson recognized GRW engineers Todd Solomon and Joe Pavoni for working the last five years with the city to plan the project. He also recognized W. Rogers Company out of Lexington, which is the construction partner for the project with general contractor Cobra Construction. He said W. Rogers Company had worked with GRW on more than 20 projects over the years. He also said the involvement of Rose and other elected officials ensured that the project got to the point it has now reached.

“We probably wouldn’t be here today unless Jack Rose had taken it upon himself to jump in and rescue this project, in a sense,” Gilkerson said. “It was kind of mired in the mud until Jack went with us to Frankfort and started talking to the Frankfort people and with the EPA people about an extension to their agreed order. We were under a pretty strict guideline to get this plant completed that we just couldn’t flat get it done. The construction, we just couldn’t get it done because of the complexity.”

Gilkerson continued, ““You know, regulators, the EPA and the state division of water, they don’t listen to staff members as much or maybe consultants or engineers, but they will listen to elected officials, and Jack, you’ve done a great job, so it’s got us to this point. We’re excited about it. It’s a great project for the City of Murray and a great project for us.”

Rogers said W. Rogers Company has been in the water and wastewater business for 45 years and has built almost 400 plants across the Southeast and Midwest.

At Thursday night's city council meeting, Solomon said the work would begin on the project Monday. He said GRW is planning to take weekly photos throughout the 40 months of construction to put on the city's website and would show slides to the council each month to update them on the project's progress. He said the photos would be taken in the same location so a time lapse video could be put together when the project is finished more than three years from now.