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Panel taps firm to replace lead pipes

Full S&WB must sign off on choice for billion-dollar job

BY BEN MYERS
Staff writer

A Sewerage & Water Board panel on Thursday again chose CDM Smith to oversee the utility's stalled effort to replace lead water pipes, nearly a year after the same firm was tapped for the billion-dollar job only to be scuttled by a bid protest.

Though the S&WB's five-member

selection committee has settled on the local engineering firm, the utility's full governing board must still sign off on the panel's choice. The board next meets on April 22. Committee members said they were impressed by CDM Smith's work and references in other cities, including Chicago, Milwaukee and Newark.

"We are committed to delivering a program that reflects the urgen-

cy of this challenge and the expectations of the community. Together with SWBNO, we will work to build a healthier future for every resident of New Orleans," CDM Smith's chief marketing officer, Julia Forgas, said in a statement.

Pressure is mounting to get the stalled lead pipe overhaul up and running, since federal regulations require all lead pipes to be replaced by 2037. The S&WB esti-

mates that as many as 85,000 lead pipes will need to be replaced, though the actual number won't be known until the utility completes a full inventory.

The S&WB has already begun a limited number of replacements around schools and day care centers under a separate contract, and it expects to ramp up the citywide project within 18

months. That would leave a decade to complete a project initially expected to take 13 years.

S&WB Executive Director Randy Hayman determined in December that his agency had violated its own procurement rules the first time it settled on CDM Smith, which he said could jeopardize federal funding for the project.

The second-place finisher in the initial bid, Community Infrastructure Partners, protested last year

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Hayman



The Rev. Ajani Gibson, center, of St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, blesses the gumbo z'herbes cooking in the kitchen at Dooky Chase's Restaurant on Holy Thursday in New Orleans. Praying next to him are chefs Edgar 'Dook' Chase IV, right, and Zoe Chase. Holy Thursday is the day Christians remember the last meal Jesus Christ shared with his followers, focusing on love, service, and preparing for Easter.

STAFF PHOTOS BY CHRIS GRANGER

From thy bounty



Edgar 'Dook' Chase IV, top left, and Stella Chase Reese, far left, step out of the kitchen to greet customers gathered for Holy Thursday lunch at Dooky Chase's Restaurant.

Trump fires AG Bondi

BY ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, ERIC TUCKER, MICHAEL BALSAMO and MICHELLE L. PRICE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Thursday that Pam Bondi is out as his attorney general, ending the contentious tenure of a loyalist who upended the Justice Department's culture of independence from the White House, oversaw large-scale firings of career employees and moved aggressively to investigate the Republican president's perceived enemies.

The departure followed months of scrutiny over the Justice Department's handling of files related to the Jeffrey Epstein sex trafficking investigation

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Bondi



Chelsie Kirby, left, holding Willy, and Kynzie Kirby, holding Smokey, hold onto the metal gates of the pen before releasing their dogs at Uncle Earl's Hog Dog Trials in Winnfield on March 21.

STAFF PHOTO BY JAVIER GALLEGOS

It's dogs vs. hogs at Winnfield event

Hundreds gather to watch Catahoula corral feral hogs

BY AIDAN McCaHILL
Staff writer

At the edge of a sand arena, two Catahoula leopard dogs hang suspended in midair, legs cartoonishly churning as they're held by two squatting men. It's a hot and dusty Saturday afternoon at the Winnfield Fairgrounds in the third week of March. Bees, barefooted children and "hog dog" trainers from as far as France and Australia swarm the surrounding wooden bleachers.

A gate swings open and a feral hog trots out. The men let go. The dogs, Goose and Max, hurl themselves with abandon.

For four minutes, the barks don't stop as the canine duo plant themselves within 2 feet of a beast twice their size, attempting to

keep it from moving, or at "bay." "Talk to me baby, talk to me!" yells their owner, Randy Dorrell, a ritualized chant that seems more for him than his dogs.

Several times, the hog lunges and bites, but like NFL cornerbacks, Goose and Max flip their hips and retreat to avoid the charge, then resume the double-team pressure. When the hog attempts to break the bay, the dogs sink their teeth into the tough skin and briefly hold on. If the hog runs free for too long, or the dogs break eye contact, judges watching from above subtract points.

Goose is a seven-time world champion in hog baying and, despite being 9 years old, still has the mix of boldness, athleticism and focus that has kept him at the top of the sport since he was 10 months old.

But it's day six of Uncle Earl's Hog Dog Trials, and anything short of a perfect score of 10 in this elite

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