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Pine Belt

In brief

Hattiesburg

City council consider delaying vote

Hattiesburg City Council members plan to meet today to decide whether to delay the August 22 special election to reelect Red Bailey as the city's 14th councilman. Council President Carter Roll and Mayor Johnny Bree on Friday recommended delaying the election to August 29. That would give voters until Friday to register and candidates until August 9 to qualify. The other two items on the agenda include the upcoming City Street paving project and a Community Development Block Grant to home buyers. City Council Clerk Jennifer Doughby said Tuesday the meeting will be at 5:15 p.m. in council chambers.

Other candidate seeks Ward 4 race

Mayor "Bud" Mitchell said today he plans to seek the 14th Hattiesburg City Council seat. Mitchell, 48, is a semi-retired store manager for H&R Block and neighborhood coordinator for the 10th Ward neighborhood who lives at the corner of Concert Street and 15th Avenue.

Funds to help USM polymer school

Science foundation invests \$19M in 10 institutions

Staff and wire reports

The University of Southern Mississippi is one of 10 institutions involved in a five-year, \$19 million polymer science research investment from the National Science Foundation. The project will be run out of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, where the NSF will establish a polymer science and engineer-

ing research center. The first stage of the project, which could be renewed after five years, begins Aug. 1. Southern Miss will receive a \$500,000 cash injection to expand the scope of its highly regarded School of Polymer Science and High Performance Materials, and work in partnership with Case Western and others. "We've been brought in on the project because of our history of very strong support from the NSF," said Marek Urban, director and professor in the polymer science school. The center, one of 17 estab-

lished by the NSF nationwide, will work to integrate polymer science, involving plastics, and engineering. Urban will research in optics, laser physics, biomedical engineering and other scientific disciplines. Southern Miss' focus will be on polymeric layering and barrier technology. In layman's terms, that means using high-tech plastics to form protective



membranes that could keep fruit more fresh or refrigerators dust-free as they move from manufacturer to showroom floor. Urban said another real-world application of such technology could be creating an electronics packaging that keeps all traces of moisture out. The barriers could be used in pipes and biomedical devices as well. Sergei Nazarenko, assistant professor of polymer science and engineering, worked at Case Western for 10 years before coming to Southern Miss in 2004. Instrumental in secur-

ing the NSF grant, Nazarenko is Southern Miss' site representative for the project and is working most closely with scientists from the University of Texas at Austin on layering and barrier technology. The program, he said, offers students exposure to cutting-edge research. "It's very pioneering and revolutionary technology," Nazarenko said. The NSF's financial support of such research comes at what some experts say is a crucial time for American science. As foreign countries emerge as leaders in new technology and

engineering, academics and lawmakers in the United States are focusing on nurturing domestic growth in these areas to keep this country scientifically competitive. "One of our objectives is to attract as many domestic students as possible and rely less on international students in order to increase our competitiveness," Urban said. "Our program aims at bringing the best talent from America into graduate programs to be involved in research activities to serve the nation and serve the people of the United States."



Lights back on at Petal park

By Nancy Kaffer
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PETAL - After almost a year, Petal's ball park soon will be back in action. Repairs on lights on the ball field - damaged during Hurricane Katrina - at Friendly Park were completed last week. Parks and Recreation Director