



## Jackson County could save money on telecommunications, says study

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**April M. Havens, The Mississippi Press**

PASCAGOULA, Miss. -- Jackson County could be saving thousands of dollars on its telecommunications costs, RMH Telecom Consultants' Robert Hardy told supervisors Monday.

The Board of Supervisors had given the company an approximately \$15,000 contract to review the county's system and look for ways to save taxpayer dollars.

Since the county is building a new general services complex, which will require an extensive telecommunications package, supervisors thought it was time to review the 30-year-old system for inefficiencies and upgrade needs.

Hardy delivered the results of that review to supervisors during the regular board meeting Monday morning.

The county could save \$69,000 annually just by billing its current services through the state's Department of Information Technology Services, which has secured discounts from service providers, Hardy said.

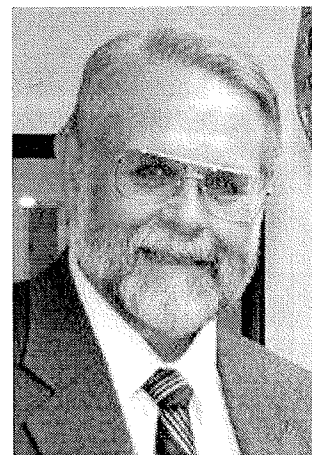
Hardy said his company has also saved the county \$17,500 by ending service to connections that were cut following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The connections were halted during the cleanup, but the provider continued charging for the connections, Hardy said. The county may also be eligible for retroactive rebates for the overcharges.

Since the county's system is so outdated, Hardy noted that renting new equipment might be the best option since the technology is changing so rapidly.

Annually, the county spends about \$400,000 on telecommunications, he said.

Board President Mike Mangum said the information Hardy gave "was absolutely worth the money."



(File)

Mike Mangum

County Administrator Alan Sudduth and the county's Information Systems and Maintenance departments will work together to recommend to the board which of Hardy's suggestions should be implemented, Mangum said.

Mangum noted the county will more than likely pursue savings through the state's ITS department.

Also during Monday's meeting, supervisors agreed to:

• Award a \$119,527 contract to American Tennis Courts Inc. for work at the Sue Ellen Street Park. The company will install two tennis courts and a basketball court, both with lighting and fencing. The work is in addition to other upgrades there, such as revamping the neighborhood's walking track.

• Appoint Eric Patronas, who has worked in the county's Information Systems department for four years, to the Gulf Regional Planning Commission.

• Approve the disposal of a modular unit that was used to temporarily house the Jackson County Health Department after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The unit is in such poor condition that its value is less than the cost for relocation and repair, supervisors said. TWT Transport has agreed to move the units for free.

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