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City to pay pollution fine with pond work

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Almost a year after the Pasadena City Council approved a plan to keep from sending a \$234,500 fine to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the TCEQ has accepted the deal.

p>On Wednesday, the TCEQ announced that it had approved the fine against the city of Pasadena for water quality violations.

In May 2004, council members approved an alternative to the fines - a Supplemental Environmental Project for the full penalty amount to go to improving a retention pond in the northwest corner of the city.

According to Assistant to the Mayor Dave Benson, the agreement will allow the city to use the money for the improvement of the community.

Earlier this year, council appropriated the funds for the repairs in anticipation of TCEQ's acceptance of the plan.

Benson said that one stipulation to the plan was that it could not be a part of any then-current planning document.

He said while the repairs were needed, they were not prioritized in the city's Capital Improvement Plan, and therefore complied with the stipulation.

Improving the pond should help in the prevention of raw sewage leaking into the surrounding ground and into Vince Bayou.

According to information previously published in The Pasadena Citizen, in 1999, workers contracted by the city began construction of the New Vince Bayou Treatment Plant, which would ensure city compliance with state and federal pollution guidelines. The TCEQ asked that the project be completed in December 2001, but that facility, while in its final phases, was not completed by the deadline.

The detention pond set for improvement on Light Company Road in a northwestern corner of the city has been in operation at least two decades and serves as an overflow facility if the treatment plant is at capacity because of storms or heavy rain. Heavy rains can quadruple the amount of water normally housed at the treatment plant. Water is pumped to the pond after flooding, and then it is later pumped back to the treatment facility.

Workers will completely repair the earthen detention pond, which has slowly eroded over the years. Workers are set to construct new berms, stabilize slopes and clean the bottom of the detention pond.

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