

# Federal judge scolds city

## Augusta upsets court by asking for more time

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A federal judge's written opinion this week chastised the city of Augusta for making time-wasting motions.

In the case of Thompson Building Wrecking Co. and three other local contractors against the city, U.S. District Judge B. Avant Edenfield has already issued an order preventing the city from using race as a preference factor in awarding bids and contracts.

The city attorneys asked the judge to grant more time to try to determine the possible damages and attorney fees sought by the plaintiffs, and whether plaintiffs have standing to sue.

There's no need to delay the case for these reasons, the judge wrote in an opinion issued Thursday. Both reasons are irrelevant, he wrote.

The plaintiffs aren't seeking monetary damages, and the attorney fees will be granted to Thompson's attorney, Robert Mullins, if he prevails, the judge wrote. As far as standing, Judge Edenfield noted that the city has already stipulated that the plaintiffs have standing.

"All of this forces the court to wonder whether the city has even read its previous orders and the applicable law in the case," Judge Edenfield wrote in a footnote.

"Finally, the city wants more time because it has added 'outside counsel' to this case. Any competent lawyer ought to be able to quickly get up to speed in this non-complex, non-voluminous case," the judge wrote.

According to city documents, the Atlanta law firm McKenna Long & Aldridge has been hired to help with drafting a new Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program city ordinance and defending the city in Thompson's lawsuit.

According to city records, the firm billed \$10,651 for the first month.

Because it appears both side are interested in settling the case outside of a courtroom, the judge granted what he deemed an implied joint motion for a stay.

Judge Edenfield's order sets the case aside for 30 days.

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