Biography

Mr. A.J. Holloway was born in Biloxi, Mississippi. His parents were from the D’Iberville and St. Martin areas of the Coast, and he lived with his grandparents for a short time during his childhood before the family moved to Ocean Springs. When he was in the tenth grade, the family moved to Biloxi, and he was graduated from Biloxi High School. He attended The University of Mississippi, was graduated, and made a living for a number of years coaching and teaching in Columbus and Canton, Mississippi. In 1966, he moved back to Biloxi, where he has made his home, working in administration in the Biloxi School System and serving as manager there when Hurricane Camille roared ashore in 1969. At the time of this interview, Mr. Holloway was mayor of Biloxi.
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Sloan: This is Stephen Sloan. The date is January 18, 2007. I’m with Mayor A.J. Holloway of Biloxi. The Mayor is sitting down with us in city hall in Biloxi. And this is for the Hurricane Katrina Oral History Project. Mayor, I appreciate you taking the time to visit with me for a little bit. I know your schedule is crazy, and you’ve got a lot of demands. So I know to carve out an hour for us; I sure appreciate it. I want to start by talking to you a little bit about your background, and we can get into the political background, but more so where were you born and where were you raised.

Holloway: Well, I was born in Biloxi, Mississippi. And my parents were from the D’Iberville and St. Martin areas. The Coast was just right across the Bay there. Lived over with my grandparents for a while, and then we moved to Ocean Springs, stayed in Ocean Springs till I was in the tenth grade, and then moved to Biloxi and finished at Biloxi High School. Went to Ole Miss [The University of Mississippi], graduated Ole Miss and went to coaching and teaching in Columbus, Mississippi, and Canton Mississippi, and then moved back to Biloxi and been here ever since.

Sloan: OK. When did you move back to Biloxi?

Holloway: I graduated in [19]63, so I guess it was [19]66 when we moved back here.

Sloan: OK, just in time for Camille.

Holloway: Just in time for Camille.

Sloan: Yeah. Now, when you moved back, you were coaching still then?

Holloway: Yes. But I’d gone to the Biloxi School System in administration.

Sloan: I see.

Holloway: And I was a business manager for the school system there for about eight years, so I was with the schools when Camille came through and never thought we’d see anything else as bad as Camille. That was the benchmark that we all used, was Camille.
Sloan: What got you interested in administration?

Holloway: More money. (laughter) Yeah.

Sloan: So you could do that and continue to coach at first, I would imagine.

Holloway: No. I quit coaching.

Sloan: You quit coaching.

Holloway: I didn’t coach any more after I left Columbus.

Sloan: OK. What was that experience like, coaching?

Holloway: Well, you know, of course, I was in sports all my life, and that’s what I thought I wanted to do, and I guess I didn’t see much of a future in it. Of course, you know, back in those days you wasn’t making much teaching and coaching. I believe I started off at $4800. And so I just was trying to get in something to make a little more dollars. Had a daughter and then had a son three years after that, so. Had our daughter right when we moved, right after I got out of college, so.

Sloan: Well, I know there’s a strong connection between sports and politics so maybe that helped you.

Holloway: Oh, yes. I was always kind of interested in politics, you know. And the school system, when you get into administration, that’s politics.

Sloan: Yeah.

Holloway: Superintendent of education has got to be a good politician. Of course, I wasn’t superintendent, but I worked for him.

Sloan: Talk a little bit about your work when you came here in [19]66. What were you doing, and what was the type of work you were doing and the state of the school system and that sort of thing?

Holloway: Well, with the school system is, the position I had was business manager. I was in charge of all the purchasing, in charge of the maintenance and the cafeteria’s personnel, and just over sort of the business end of the school, accounting and that part. I wasn’t involved with the curriculum or any of the teachers. We had an assistant superintendent and a superintendent, and so that was the structure that I worked under.

Sloan: What was the state of the school system that you remember when you came?
Holloway: Our school system, Biloxi’s always had a good school system. We have, of course, a lot of military people in Biloxi and also a lot of civilians that worked at the military base, so we got federal monies as well as state monies for our programs. We have what they call 741 money or 941 money; I can’t remember which. But let’s say its 741-A and 741-B. Well, 741-A meant your parents worked on Keesler but lived off of Keesler, and then they paid so much money for your parents—I mean for your education of your children, how many children you had. The other, the [741]-B were the people that, the children lived on base. Their parents was in the service, and that was a little less because—no, that was a little more because they didn’t pay ad valorem taxes.

Sloan: I see.

Holloway: And property taxes.

Sloan: Yeah.

Holloway: So the federal government made up the difference on that. And so this was just about the time also that Title I was coming in from the federal government, started putting more monies into the schools. And so Biloxi was a pretty well off, always has been a pretty well-off district. Even today Biloxi, with the management they have in the school system and with what we’re getting from the federal government, our ad valorem school property taxes is the lowest on the Coast and one of the lowest in the state. We only have a thirty-mills, and you’re allowed to go up by law, I believe, to fifty-two mills. And some of the districts on the Coast are right up to that fifty-two mills. And Biloxi has been fortunate enough, particularly since the inception of gaming, that we haven’t had to—you see, the schools get 20 percent of what gaming money comes into the City, goes to the municipal school district. They’re receiving about six million dollars a year from gaming, so. As I said, Biloxi always had a pretty good school system.

Sloan: But I know the timing with the introduction of gaming was critical because I’ve read, I think, in some things, some of your speeches, that there hadn’t been a new school constructed since 1960 or something like that.

Holloway: That’s correct; 1960 was when the Biloxi High School was built, and that was the last major construction with the exception of additions.

Sloan: Um-hm. So that fusion of money was at a critical time, as far as infrastructure. Right?

Holloway: Right.

Sloan: Well, let’s go back and talk about Camille. Like you said, and everyone I’ve talked to, about Katrina that’s been around, before they tell me their Katrina story, they tell me their Camille story.
Holloway: Um-hm.

Sloan: And talk a little bit about Camille and your experience and your family’s experience.

Holloway: But I had a pretty good experience on Camille. Camille came on a Sunday night or Monday morning early. Well, my family and I were out on Ship Island. We spent the weekend out on the island on a boat. And I called the Coast Guards on the radio to see. I knew the storm was out there, and I called him on the radio to see if I should go in that Saturday afternoon. And they said, “No. You don’t have anything to worry about because the storm, Camille’s going to Texas.” And we kept the radio on and kept a close eye on it, but we was in a place where they called the quarantine station, and that was a channel went up to the beach, and there was (inaudible) on both sides. And by the time we got the word that Camille was turning, it was dark, and we couldn’t get out. So we had to wait till daybreak. And the boat I was in was Old Biloxi Lugger, which would go about eight, ten miles an hour. Well, it took us a pretty good while to get in because the water was getting kind of rough. We had kids on there and women, and everybody was kind of nervous and scared. And of course they were looking for me to come in with the schools because we had shelters, and we had to get people to man them and everything and open them up. And so when we hit the deck, my daddy took the boat, and he went up the river, him and I and a friend of mine, and rode Camille out up at the river.

Sloan: So you got in what time on Sunday?

Holloway: We got in around noon. And I had to go back to work. And my wife is—we had two children, and so she went home and started fixing up the place there, see. So I was on duty, and I went back, and I told her what we was hearing and so forth. So she said, well, she wasn’t staying there by herself, so she came with me to my office at the school and stayed there. We were going to—a pretty good building there, and we couldn’t tell just how bad it was. Same right here, you couldn’t tell. Of course this storm came in the daytime, and we knew what was going on, but Camille just, it was just like the front beach like it is now. Camille just didn’t come in further, and Camille didn’t stick around like Katrina did. Camille was a compact storm with strong, strong winds and a twenty-foot tide, but it came in and just went on through. [Katrina] blew for hours, and the water stayed up a long time. Now, I don’t know how long the water stayed up with Camille because it was all dark. But we felt like Camille was probably the worst we’d ever seen.

Sloan: Um-hm. Did you have, in preparing the schools, what did you do to prepare for Camille? Do you remember?

Holloway: Well, what we did, we didn’t do much for Camille. Because we didn’t think it was coming to here. It just, it just turned all of a sudden. So we did very little preparation except for opening up the schools for shelter. We opened up all our
schools. Well, at that time we had Howard II, Dukate (inaudible) Junior High here and a high school, and we didn’t have any north of the Bay, so we opened them all in the peninsula. Well, four, Dukate, Howard II, Nichols, (inaudible) all got water in it, deep water with people in it, and they were going upstairs. And some of them left and went to, swam over to the hotel that was in front of them, that Nativity (?) Hotel was in front of Dukate Elementary School and got into a taller building there. And so it was lucky. I don’t recall if we lost anybody [in] shelters down there or not. I think most of them were safe and didn’t perish in it in Camille, though we lost—I forget now exactly how many from Biloxi people got killed in Camille, but it was quite a few.

Sloan: Yeah. Was it like over fifty in Katrina? That’s what it was.

Holloway: It’s fifty-one for Katrina. I think that’s right.

Sloan: So less than that would still—

Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: Yeah. So Camille came in. I guess as business manager you had a lot to do with kind of restoring the schools.

Holloway: Oh, yeah. We had all that to deal with getting back open. We got back open probably within a month, six weeks. Keesler Air Force Base was a tremendous asset to us after Camille. They came in and really cleaned out a lot of the schools for us and, of course, we had FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] at that time working with them, too, to replace everything. We had to, particularly on the far end of the point—now, the Back Bay and Nichols Schools, when the water came there, it came across the old landfill, and of course they condemned everything in the schools. I mean all the cafeteria equipment, even the stainless steel tables, they said, “Throw them away.” And so we had to—it took us about a year to get all kitchens back up. We was cooking at the senior high school, and we had people delivering meals to the other schools and the junior high school. So we had roofs to put on. We had just the same as they have now. I mean, just school was out for, as I said, at least six weeks. We got it back pretty quick, really, because this Katrina we had two schools that was out for over a year before they got back.

Sloan: What do you remember of relief from like NGO [nongovernmental organizations] and unaffiliated relief workers and things like that?

Holloway: I can’t really remember many faith-based volunteers coming after Camille. We did have a few people come in here but nothing of any real significance at that time. As I said, it was mostly Keesler and just everybody doing the same thing we did this time. We just, as the governor likes to say, “Hitched up our britches and went to work.” And that’s what we did after Camille, too.
Sloan: I know this is the era before the FEMA trailer. Do you know what they were doing for housing for people that lost homes during Camille?

Holloway: Well, I don’t know if they didn’t—did they not have FEMA trailers then?

Sloan: I don’t think so.

Holloway: I’m not sure if they did or didn’t, so I really don’t know what they did then. I can’t recall.

Sloan: So you were with the school system through that storm, and then on into the [19]70s, you were still with school system?

Holloway: Yes. I left the school system in the [19]70s and I went to the banking business. And I worked in the banking business for a little while. I forget how long. Then I went into the restaurant business. I owned a restaurant for about another seven or eight years. And then I went from there; I had somebody that wanted to buy it so I sold it to him, and went back in the mortgage business for myself doing, making mortgage loans and selling—I had a contract with GE Credit Union, and with a lot of credit with one of the local banks, and I just flipped loans and make the difference. And at that time the interest rate went up to 21 percent and so that put me out of business.

Sloan: (laughter) That’s President Carter. Remember the Carter Administration.

Holloway: Yeah, and so I went from there to, went to work for the state tax commission.

Sloan: Oh, OK. In the early [19]80s you did?

Holloway: Um-hm.

Sloan: Talk a little bit about that work.

Holloway: Well, I was a senior revenue agent, went to work—I don’t know—oh, I know how I got there. A friend of mine was working, Barlow Hunt(?) was working for the tax commission, and he had the territory in Biloxi here. And I go to mass during Lent every day, every morning. And one morning I was coming out the mass, and Barlow was coming out, so I asked him if he knew anybody looking for somebody to go to work for. So he said, “I’m retiring.” He said, “Why don’t you see if you can get this job.” He says, “It’s a good, decent job.” He said, “Anybody in the government, anybody that you can talk to, to talk to the commissioner.” So I had worked for William Winter in his campaign, and so I said, “Well, I know the governor.” He said, “Well, that’s a good person to know.” (laughter) He said, “Because the commissioner is appointed by the governor.” So I went up to see him, and I didn’t go to Governor Winter. I just went to the commissioner there and talked
with him. And of course he knew who I was. I’d played football at Ole Miss, and he was an Ole Miss fan, so he knew who I was. And so we kind of bargained for a salary, and he gave me the job.

Sloan: OK. Talk about—

Holloway: I was just going to—I had no idea I’d stay there as long as I did, but I did stay there about ten, twelve years.

Sloan: OK. So you were there during the [19]80s.

Holloway: Um-hm.

Sloan: Yeah, came in [19]79?

Holloway: Yeah, so I left there in [19]89.

Sloan: OK. So you were over what region in South Mississippi?

Holloway: I was over the, all of Biloxi and D’Iberville. I didn’t go into Gulfport at all, I don’t think. If I did, I was just right on the edge. But it was all of Biloxi and the whole D’Iberville area.

Sloan: What did you learn from that experience, you think, that work that you were doing?

Holloway: Well, I don’t know. I helped a lot of people in business, that were having troubles and problems, kind of advised them not to be throwing your money away here. You need to cut your losses and get out. That was about the time the Vietnamese was coming in here, too. And they’re very industrial people, and a lot of them tried to go into businesses, but didn’t know anything about the laws and the rules and regulations, so I helped a lot of those guys and people to get into business. It was a good job. I enjoyed it. Then I started talking and thinking about going into politics. I was elected one time for—a guy came in the restaurant, Mr. John Collins who was a local architect here, and he said, “I’m getting too old. I’m on the election commission, and you ought to run for it. Why don’t you just, why don’t you run in my place this time?” And so I did, and I got elected. There was three of us. I don’t know how many people was running, but I got the top vote-getter to the next two and (inaudible) we served in that for four years; no pay. Just running elections.

Sloan: This is why you had the restaurant?

Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: To do this.
Holloway: Um-hm.

Sloan: OK.

Holloway: And so then I decided to run for the city council. Biloxi was kind of in a turmoil at the time. We just had the Sherry murder case, and everything had gone through, so the city was kind of in pretty bad shape. And so the city council and the mayor all turned over with the new—except for one. The minority councilman was reelected, but all the other council people—we’ve got six, seven councilmen—was defeated, and of course Mayor Blessey didn’t run for reelection, and Pete Halat was elected mayor. And so I served on the council for four years, and at the end when it was getting ready to have another city election, I talked to a couple of people, and they said they weren’t going to run. Bobby (inaudible) was a supervisor and he ran the last time for mayor and then got beat, and I asked him if he was going to run again, and he said no. So I told my wife that I was going to run for mayor.

Sloan: (laughter) How did she respond when you told her that?

Holloway: Well, she wasn’t real happy. (laughter)

Holloway: But I knew, I just had a gut feeling that I didn’t think that Pete could get reelected. He just had just too much baggage there. And the only other one that was running was the minority councilman, and Biloxi’s population was not conducive for a minority or two to get elected. And so I knew—I was a Democrat as a council person—and so I knew that if I ran in the Democratic primary that I probably would get beat because they have to give your incumbent at least 35 percent of the vote, and the minority’s going to get 100 percent of minority vote, so that left me running third. So I talked to Trent Lott, a couple of Republicans around here, and then so I decided to run as a Republican. I decided, like one guy told me, he said, “Well”—whether I run independent or not. And he said, “What you ought to do is get you a horse and ride it.” And a Democrat’s not a—I mean an independent is not a horse. So that’s what I did. And there was four other people qualified as Republicans, and I beat them in the first primary, and that wasn’t his primary. And then, lo and behold, an independent jumps in. So there was three of us in the race in the general election, and then when it came down, when the votes were counted at night, I was way behind these two boxes in the east end, which is the primary minority and Democrat, left me behind pretty good way. As a matter of fact, I didn’t think I could catch up. But when we left here, and then from every ward from then on I won, every box, and I came in by seventeen votes.

Sloan: Wow. Well, of course, the Republican party had kind of gained a foothold in the [19]80s.

Holloway: Yeah. They were—
Sloan: Who survived the party, yeah, and very strong by the time you got to that point. Do you remember some of the major issues in that election that were on the table that—

Holloway: Well, you know the City was broke. The last two mayors had been indicted. People were just tired. They were wanting something fresh. They wanted something—of course, I wasn’t fresh. I mean I’ve been around a long time. But I think they saw that I was honest, and I was a straight talker. I don’t talk that much, to tell you the truth. But they knew my wife, knew my family, like, my daddy and my mother and my aunts and uncles and so forth like that, so. But I think I was going to tell you—well, then of course, gaming was being talked on that time, and it was voted. We voted for it two times, and it passed in 1992, and I took office in [19]93. And the first casino opened right when I was taking office then, a little bit before I took office. I got elected, but I wasn’t in office yet. And that was the Isle of Capri. And so since then, Biloxi’s been doing good. I ran unopposed last time. The time before that I had a fellow run against me spent about $400,000, and I beat him 58 percent to 42 percent.] And another one was a supervisor, the time before that, and I beat him 62 percent, something like that, so. And I didn’t have any opposition two years ago, year and a half ago. So I hope I don’t have any opposition this time. (laughter)

Sloan: Has your wife forgiven you yet for running for mayor?

Holloway: Yeah, yeah, she’s forgiven me. But see, the funny part about that, my wife worked for Gerald (inaudible) when he was mayor. And she knew what he went through, and that wasn’t pretty. So.

Sloan: Let’s talk about the—you talked about the plight and kind of the City’s finances, there in the early [19]90s. Talk about how you think that came about and maybe some opportunities that were missed and things like that.

Holloway: Well, how it came about is—of course Biloxi has always been a hospitality city. I mean, we were always the one that the illegal gaming back in the early [19]30s, [19]40s, [19]50s, up until about I think 1960 when they were, whenever prohibition ended is when the illegal gaming started. And then when that happened, the I-10 opened up, people just kept going down to—people that were coming from Louisiana, and so forth, to the east beaches, just kept going down to Destin, Gulf Shores, and other places like that. And the hotels that we had here, most of them were out-of-state owners, and they were not keeping up their properties. They wasn’t putting any money back into; they were just taking it out. They wouldn’t pay any taxes. They wouldn’t pay any water and fuel bills, and the people just didn’t come here any more. It was just unattractive. It was bad business practices, and so it just kept going down. And that was the reason that we pushed for gaming in this area. Same thing wasn’t only happening in Biloxi. It was happening in other areas of the state, too. I had a brother-in-law in Natchez who was a doctor, and he was having real financial troubles in Natchez, and that’s when they came up, was the last one out of Natchez to turn out the lights, the last one out of the city. And actually he talked, my
brother-in-law talked to his state senator, which lived around the corner from him there, to actually put a bill for gaming. And he told him that he ought to be crazy. But he talked to him a pretty good bit, and he decided he didn’t do it. And my brother-in-law was at a time—David Steplow (?) is his name. At the time he was president of Mississippi Medical Association, and he did a lot of lobbying all over the state for these, with other doctors, to talk to their representatives and senators. And I give him a lot of credit. He wasn’t but sixty-two when he died, and I give him a lot of credit for gaming to be passed. Because like he told them, he said, “If they can’t vote for it, see if they can take a walk.” He said, “The state’s in dire straits.” And it was. And look what’s happened. I mean in Tunica, just an example there. So the same thing was happening here in Biloxi and Natchez. Adams County passed their gaming bill referendum on the first go round. Biloxi’s and Harrison County’s failed. I think that was good because that gave us time to really sit down and lay out how we wanted it to be, where we wanted it to be, and how we wanted it to operate. I mean, at that time, we didn’t have a strong gaming commission. I don’t think they even had one. But I was on the council, and we was talking about setting the hours. We was talking about asking the legislature how much we wanted for a local share of gaming revenue, and where we wanted it was on it. And so we had an extra year to work on that. And the business people had an extra year to campaign for it and doing a better job of campaigning, putting the real campaign program together and hiring somebody to run it. And it passed in Biloxi the first time, but it was beaten over in the western part of the county. So that’s what it was. The theme of it was jobs, jobs. And that’s how it passed. And of course we was kicking around, closing on Sundays and closing at midnight and opening up early. A couple of them were saying that type of business, let the market take care of itself, and do it just like Vegas. Most of our state laws are copied from Las Vegas and Nevada’s, and that’s what we decided to do. We had public hearings all over the city.

Sloan: I guess you were on the council at that time when the discussion—

Holloway: Right.

Sloan: Can you characterize the discussion that went on about it as far as what you sensed from the residents?

Holloway: Well, most of the residents, as I said, in Biloxi was for it. I mean Biloxi probably voted 70 percent. We had some opposition from some of the churches. Some of the pastors were against it and preached against it. Catholic Churches left it alone, even though they knew it was going to hurt their bingos. (laughter) So the place we were scared of—if it didn’t pass this time, you couldn’t be able to vote on it for another five years, and we were really concerned about the western part of the county, but Gulfport came through.

Sloan: Um-hm. What was the vote, the percentage?
Holloway: I think the percentage, the overall percentage was about maybe 60 percent. I don’t think you had to have a 60 percent majority of it. It’s the simple majority, and I think it passed right around 60 percent. The western part of the county, Long Beach particularly, I know voted against it, and some outside in the county voted against it. But D’Iberville, Biloxi, and Gulfport got enough votes to swing.

Sloan: I talked to folks over in Bay St. Louis that were involved with the push there, and they said it was about creating opportunity in the community because people were leaving to go elsewhere. She also talked about, they had a clause in there where they had to put turnstiles, or at one point they were going to put turnstiles in and would charge—

Holloway: Yeah. They’re talking about a fee to get into them and all that stuff, and we stayed away from there. Now, at Tunica they did; they took in a bunch of money, but we didn’t have a head count, but we actually sent, when we sent our recommendation to Jackson to the legislature—I forget—we had more taxes than what we’ve got. But we have a tax on each gaming station, each slot, each table game, and we had that way up high, and they knocked that down. And I think we had 5 percent of the gross gaming, and they knocked that down to 3.5 percent. With the scale that they had, I think it was something like the first 60,000. Then if you get—3 percent, and then you get so many percentage after that and on up to 4 percent. And of course we started getting 4 percent right off the bat. And it was out of that 4 percent goes 20 percent to the municipal school district, 10 percent to the county school district, 10 percent to the county public safety, and 20 percent to the municipal public safety, which leaves 40 percent for the general fund. And so we’ve been getting about twenty million a year just on Coast gaming taxes.

Sloan: Um-hm. You talked about the state of the City as you moved in. I mean, it’s good timing on your part, I guess, in that—

Holloway: Perfect.

Sloan: —you got funds to do things with, where I’m sure former administrations were hamstrung by no money.

Holloway: That’s correct.

Sloan: So how do you prioritize that? And I mean, you’ve got such an influx of funds, how do you start thinking about the best way to use it?

Holloway: Well, what my purpose was to get our infrastructure back. I mean, we just had years and years of neglect, man. I mean. And then of course building our public safety up. We couldn’t buy tires for our police cars. So we immediately started hiring new policemen and firemen, and then purchasing the equipment that we needed in the public safety first. And then we started doing all kind of streets, water and sewer drainage projects. We had places that were flooding, had been flooding for years.
And our public safety building was an old school that was infested with gnats and all just rotting away. Well, we built a ten-million-dollar public safety building. We built a ten-million-dollar public park and recreational complex. We built new fire stations throughout the city. We improved our education. We did away with all our fees by residents in the recreation department for activities. After a couple of years, we started knocking a little tax off and the revenues kept coming. And we’d given a lot of employees raises. We’d given our employees 100 percent insurance, family and everyone. We, as I said, we quit all the fees for recreation. We’d buy all the uniforms, even the cheerleaders uniforms. So we just kept doing that. Built a new transportation system in the city. I don’t know how you came in, if you came in on I-110. But right next to I-110 we’re building a new boulevard there. That’s Carver Street. It goes all the way to the Bay. And we built another boulevard called Back Bay Boulevard all the way around to Oak Street, and the loop for the casinos, that they could get around. A lot of people like to go to more than one casino. They might have a favorite to gamble. They might have a favorite to eat. Well, those are all small streets. We went in and redid them all with new water and sewer lines, and new street lights. And improved Highway 90, some improvements there, mostly MDOT [Mississippi Department of Transportation] did that, but we just had to force them to do some of it. We just put a lot of emphasis on the infrastructure and the quality of life.

Sloan: So I want to move up because I want to make sure we have a chance to talk about Katrina. So you got ten years to build up the infrastructure there with this infusion of revenue in your time in office, and then Katrina comes.

Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: And takes a hammer to a lot of it.

Holloway: It sure did; it takes the hammer to a lot of it. I mean, we’re going to have, we got another ten years of infrastructure and work to do. We have what you call shifting sand here, and we have a low water table. And the water just shifts those pipes, and they break, and they spring leaks and holes, and before you know it, scoop, it’s got cave-ins. So we have a lot of that to do. We lost just about every one of our historical buildings we had in the city of Biloxi, like the Dantzler House, the Grimma(?) House, and the Seafood Museum, and the Hammond(?) Center, and the list just goes on and on. Well, they tell us now we’re not going to be able to replace those buildings, but we’re going to have to, some of the recreational facilities we’re just going to combine. We had three or four in the east end. We’re just going to have one big one now. And our library system is going to have to be repaired; it’s gone. We have a lot of work ahead of us. We’ve completed our insurance settlement now. We’re very, way under-insured. We had thirty million dollars worth of casualty insurance, and I’d taken out a ten-million-dollar, business-interruption policy for the first time. Been talking about it for a couple of years, and I said, “We’ve just been too darn lucky over the years now.” This is my third hurricane since I’ve been mayor, and a couple of tropical storms, but there wasn’t nothing to them. But I said, “It’s just a
matter of time. It’s not, ‘if.’ It’s, ‘when.’” So we shopped it, and it was $92,000 or $107,000 premium that we took out in June and collected in August, so.

Sloan: That’s a cheap $100,000. Yeah.

Holloway: So we collected thirty-nine million, seven hundred thousand dollars worth of insurance. So I feel real good about that, and I mean, that’s 98 percent, 99 percent. And of course our premium now has gone back up. We can’t get business interruption. We could probably get it, but it would cost us four or five million dollars. And the way I came up with ten million was that we were getting about twenty million dollars the last year. I said, “We’re not going get a hurricane. We’re going to get a bad hurricane because Ivan knocked out the Treasure Bay and knocked the Grand, knocked out the Isle, and they were back up in business in a few months.” And I said, “They’ll all be back in business in about six months.” Well, a few of them were, but most of them weren’t. So we collected the whole ten million dollars. What it was based on was what you collected last September. If you don’t collect it this September—in fact, if you collected a million dollars last September, you can collected five hundred thousand this September, we can pay you five hundred thousand dollars to put you where you were. Well, they saw right away they might as well give us the ten million because there wasn’t no way that we’d collect the money that we collected in [20]04 and [20]05. So they give us seven million to start with and then they came back and give us three million a couple of months later.

Sloan: Let’s go back. And the storm’s coming and you—I mean, you can tell it hits Florida. It begins to turn, and you get a sense that it’s coming this direction.

Holloway: Yeah, I had a bad feeling about that. I had a feeling. The way it started moving a little bit, I had a real bad feeling about it. We kept up on it, and we did all the usual things. We were well prepared for this hurricane than we’ve been of any hurricane. We had the business-interruption insurance. We’d already had a debris removal contract in place, what they call a seventy-hour push. You take bids on it and then show it to FEMA. FEMA accepted it. They was all right with it, so we got this company, and they did, I think, about like for three or four dollars a cubic yard. And we had that in place. And we always do our normal things: move our equipment around the city to where if we can’t get to it we’ll have five trucks over here, five trucks there, a bulldozer over here, and generators scattered around because we know we’ve got low-lying areas. We know we might not be able to get across the river there, so we bring some stuff over across the I-110. And so we did all our normal things. We boarded up the buildings that we usually board up. And so we thought we were prepared for it as best we could be. There’s no way you could’ve prepared this storm. So Sunday morning I got a call about 6:30 from the Weather Channel, and it was Jim Cantore.

Sloan: You never want him to show up, do you?
Holloway: And so I went back in the bedroom and I told my wife; I said, “I got some bad news.” Of course you thought something happened to somebody you know was home, and she said, “Well, what, what?” And I said, “Jim Cantore’s in town.” So he said, “Can you meet me?” I know him, and he’s been over here for different functions and so forth. I’d even talked with him several times. And I said, “Yeah.” And he said, “Can you meet about eight o’clock?” He said, “I’m down behind Emerald Beach.” So I went down there and met him, and we talked for a while and messed around and talked to the camera people and the producer and whoever else. And he always has a pretty good following. People come out to watch him, see him, and look at him. He’s like a little rock star. So we talked, and he interviewed me. Then when I left, when I was leaving, he said, “Can you come back this afternoon, A.J.?” He said, “About 3:30, four o’clock.” I said, “All right.” So when I came back about 3:30, I could tell that he was kind of upset. I mean, you could tell that it wasn’t good. So we was talking, and he said, “I’ll tell you. This thing’s bad. Right now it’s worse than Camille. Right now. The barometric pressure’s down below where it was on Camille. It’s huge. It’s covering the whole Gulf of Mexico, and there ain’t no way we can, no way we can miss it. No way out of it.” So we did an interview, and then after it was over with we’d talk a little bit. And he said, “When you leave here, on your way home, you ride around your city because you won’t see it like this tomorrow.” He knew what he was talking about. So that’s when I went home, and I told my wife, I said, “We’ll get some clothes for a couple of days, and we’re going to go up to city hall.” I felt safe up here. Said, “Call my son and daughter.” My daughter and her husband left. She was pregnant at the time and had a two year old. So they left and finally ended up in Georgia somewhere. And then my son, who has two daughters, and I went and picked up my mother and my brother, and well, we all came up here and had some cots and forth. So we stayed here for two days.

Sloan: It was the elevation here that made you decide—

Holloway: Yeah. Camille didn’t put any water here. As a matter of fact, we brought my wife’s car here, and of course I was in a City car, and we parked some City cars back here and vehicles, and nearly all was floating like a toy.

Sloan: How much water—do you know—did you get?

Holloway: We got about four foot here. We didn’t get anything in this building, but it came right up to the door, top of the door, and it stayed there for a long time. And of course we’ve got a balcony right out here, and I was going back and forth on that, holding on, looking down, and finally saw the waves started coming. And then after that, phew, just vehicles and refrigerators, ice makers coming from the Beau Rivage and [Mary] Mahoney’s, and Harbor House down there, and the restaurant near the Hob Knob(?), and then we see vehicles floating up. Then I could tell by the decorations on the Town Green down there, the buildings that was on there, I knew they were gone, see them all floating up here. And they had a little Hob Knob Café; the whole damn building came back up here. And then the debris line went all the
way down to the county courthouse down there. And so all of East End Biloxi was underwater. I mean it just, I don’t know where that water came from.

**Sloan:** Do you remember—while you were here at some point you had to start worrying about this building.

**Holloway:** I didn’t. This side of the building didn’t get anything hardly. The back side got the windows blown out, and the roof peeled off from the back side. Well, I wasn’t back there. And we was all up here, and it didn’t leak or anything up here. But, no. I did; I felt pretty good in this building here. This building will be 100 years old next year, but that’s marble and everything out there, so. And as I said, there was this, you got a little hill coming up here, but it didn’t stop it this time.

**Sloan:** So the water came up and stayed a few hours, and then the water receded?

**Holloway:** It went back down, and of course I had the police radio, and I was here talking to them back and forth and talking to the EOC [emergency operations center] office, and they was telling me, “Well, it passed; the worst of it’s passing.” I said, “Damn, if I’ve seen the worst of it because it hadn’t passed here yet.” And so it just pounded us and pounded us for a long time. Finally, when I got able to—whenever the wind died down enough for us to get out, I called the police chief, and I told him to come get me so we can go look at, survey the city and see what we’ve got left. I walked around a little bit out there a while and just, you know, I mean, it just—everything just blewed away. So he came and got me, and I said, “Well, let’s go down to the Point [Cadet] because I know that’s where everything will be torn up down there,” which it was. So I went down there, and people were just walking in the streets. They didn’t know what to do, crying. And then, we’d stop, and they’d come up to me and say, “Mayor, I lost my house. What am I going to do? Where am I going to go?” And the only thing I could tell them, I said, “Well, God will take care of you. He had a reason for this and just trust in him, and he’ll take care of you.” What else can you say?

**Sloan:** In talking to other leaders that say, there’s just a moment where everybody turns and looks at you.

**Holloway:** Um-hm.

**Sloan:** And that’s so hard because I mean you’re a victim of the storm yourself, and you (inaudible) prepared to deal with this.

**Holloway:** That’s one thing—well, they interviewed my wife, and she said that they asked her something, and she said, “Well, I knew when he walked out on that porch it looked like the whole weight of the City’s on his shoulders.” But you got to do what you got to do. Shed a few tears, get back up, and get after it.
Sloan: I can’t imagine having that vantage point on it that you had, though. I mean, you saw it happening, and then you saw the devastation as it was taking place.

Holloway: Saw it as the buildings were falling down.

Sloan: Yeah.

Holloway: They had a steel hull, about a sixty-foot, steel hull that come up here. They claim it came through the parking lot of the Hard Rock. I just don’t see how in the world it came through there. It’s not that big and the wind blowing like it was, and the storm and the waves and everything. I just don’t know how it did it, but I guess it did because it didn’t knock anything down. But it got right over there to that last building standing there, and I just knew it was going to come on over and knock it down, too. But it kept hitting and bouncing back, and I couldn’t figure out what was holding that boat back from coming on up, because they had enough water to float it. And that was over with, and I walked out of there. And they got a little bulkhead like that, and it was hitting up against that, and it stopped it right there, but it’ll knock that building down there. But it was a long two days, I’ll tell you.

Sloan: Um-hm. What do you remember most about those few days after the storm?

Holloway: Well, just everybody running around. I finally, when we left here, I opened the office up at the public safety, so I worked out of there. And here’s people coming up. Of course, you’ve got a lot of opportunists that’s coming into town. They’re coming up there and wanting this and wanting that. So what we did, we called a contractor. What I wanted to do, the first thing I wanted to do, I wanted to get this town as clean as I could. Of course, we were in a search-and-rescue mode, and we got to get these streets cleared. So the low bidder said he couldn’t do it. He couldn’t take it. I said, “Well, call the second low bidder.” So he came. He said he couldn’t do it, and now he wanted twenty dollars or something like that. So Yates Construction Company, which is right in back of us there, they came up and asked if there was anything they could do because they do work for us. They built that new building for us, and they do some construction management for us. And he said, “We’ve got people on the way down here now.” And so I negotiated a price with removing, doing a push on the roads, and didn’t know if I was going to get paid from FEMA or not because they hadn’t approved that, but you don’t have time to worry about that. You’ve got to do it because we had people lying in the—we lost fifty, fifty-one people in Biloxi. So we had to see if there was anybody alive out there, or what we could do. So they pushed and cleaned, and they worked more than seventy hours, thirty-nine streets in that time. And what they were doing, they were just pushing, getting it out in the street then pushing it to Highway 90 because they didn’t want anybody on Highway 90, MDOT. So we were just blocking the streets except for a few that we’ll need for emergencies and that. So we got all that done, and then the firefighters and the policemen were out. Then help started coming in. We’d gone down at the, one of the hurricanes in Florida. I forget which one it was. We didn’t get much here, just a little bit. Then we went to Pensacola, and we brought a bunch of
stuff down there, and we brought food, and we cooked, and we had ice and food to leave them and everything, had a bunch of fish and shrimp and stuff we cooked. And we went down there two times. Well, the next morning after the—maybe not the next morning but the next morning, the sheriff’s department from Pensacola drove up in here and with their own cookers, with their own food, and set up and cooked here for about four or five days. And then it was just unbelievable the help, like poured in here with food, and people from Charleston. All the first responders from all these cities were coming down here and cooking, and bring their own stuff, and of course the casinos. Then we set up a compound, I guess you could call it, with the Catholic school right next to us. We took over their cafeteria and outside in their streets, and we’d set up our medical facility out there and tents, and operated out of there. Then the casinos, they was taking stuff out of their freezers, and they was bringing them down here to the city, and whoever else needed them, they were just—we ate like kings, lobsters, steaks, and just all kind of food. And of course there was a lot of people coming and eating. And as I said, the Atlanta fire department come in here about two days later—we lost three fire trucks—threw the keys to the chief and said, “Keep it as long you need it.” We lost about 150 vehicles, police cars—

Sloan: I guess everything that was over here.

Holloway: Yeah, fire trucks, eighteen-wheelers, all of our heavy equipment, tractors, and bulldozers, and street sweepers, and whatever. And Cities just sending police cars down here. Just give you the keys, from Indiana. Charleston.

Sloan: Yeah, places you never heard of, huh?

Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: I’ve run out of my hour, and I don’t want to push you into the next appointment. Would it be all right if I set up something to come back, and we can visit about the kind of recovery and rebuilding?

Holloway: Um-hm.

Sloan: Because I’d like to talk to you more in detail about that if I could.

Holloway: All right.

(End of first interview)

This is the second part of the interview with A.J. Holloway and is taking place on January 30, 2007. The interviewer is Stephen Sloan.

Sloan: This is Stephen Sloan. The date is January 30, 2007. This is my second interview with Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway. We’re in his office at city hall, and thanks again, Mayor, for sitting down with me to visit. We left off last time, and we
were after the storm, and you had started to talk about just some of the relief efforts, that moment when you’ve seen the city. We talked about you seeing it coming in, and then you’d gotten out in the next couple of days, and you had seen the damage that had been done to the city. I mean, where do you turn to start to think about getting out of this?

Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: Yeah.

Holloway: That’s a good question. The first thing that I thought about doing, as I said earlier, we were probably better prepared for this hurricane than we were for any other hurricane. We had what we called a [seventy-hour] push contract onboard. And of course, we had search and rescue up and going, and we had to get the streets cleaned and had to get the stuff off the streets where the emergency vehicles could get to the people that we’re picking up. And we actually didn’t rescue anybody that I know of. Everybody that we found was dead. Fifty-one people died in Biloxi, and that’s what we know of. I find it kind of strange that out of those fifty-one people, there wasn’t one Vietnamese named in there, and of course, that’s where all, most of the Vietnamese live, in East Biloxi. Well, most of them dead—well, we had dead over in North Biloxi, too. But anyway, we got the streets cleaned and debris moved. And we just was working day to day; I mean, doing what you could. We couldn’t work out of city hall. We had to move to the public safety building, and we operated out of there for about three or four weeks before we got back into city hall. And we just was sent into emergency things that we had to do. We lost—I don’t remember if I told you earlier or not—we lost so many of our, so much of our equipment, there wasn’t much we could do. We lost three fire trucks, and hundreds of police cars, and all of our pickup trucks, and backhoes, and trackhoes, and graders, and whatever we had, bulldozers, and just—we lost just about everything we had in the way of our equipment. A lot of people came here and helped. The Atlanta Fire Department was coming in here a couple days after the storm with a fire truck and throwed the keys to the chief and said, “It’s yours as long as you need it.” And we had fire and policemen coming from all over the United States, from Oregon, as far as Oregon and just a tremendous amount—Indiana, South Bend, Indiana. I don’t know how many police they had down here and firemen, but they had a bunch of them. Same way with from Charleston, and South Carolina, and Florida, and had a bunch from Mississippi, just an outpouring of support and backup. Of course, and the National Guard started coming in, and the Army, and the Navy. They had a ship out behind Deer Island. They came in back and forth on the hovercrafts, I believe they call them, going back and forth and set up some tents. Some of them stayed on the beach down there. And this went on for quite a while. The Army and the National Guard stayed here for quite sometime before they pulled out. I would say they probably stayed till after the first of the year. And we had checkpoints. We tried to keep [Highway] 90 closed and just had a few streets that you could get to [Highway] 90, and we had, of course, checkpoints that they had to have ID, and so forth. S, then after that, the faith-based volunteers
came from all over, all over the country. They’re still here, still here. I was in Home Depot or Wal-Mart—I mean—what’s that chain?

Sloan: Lowe’s?

Holloway: Lowe’s. And a fellow, my wife asked him where something was, and knowing, he told her, he said, “Well, I’m not sure, but I think it’s around the corner.” And then he said, “You’re Mayor Holloway. Aren’t you?” And I said, “Yes.” And so he introduced himself. He’s from Arlington, Virginia, and he’d been down here since about two weeks after Katrina. And I didn’t know it, but I got him, his wife and family a couple of nights free room at one of the hotels that’s still open. And he works on homes during the week, weekends he goes out and picks him up a little change at Lowe’s. And we have people like that that work for the Habitat for Humanity who’ve been down here from right after the storm, just had never gone back home. They’d just, their family would come down, or they’d go back for a few days, and then they come right back. Samaritan’s Purse, which I think is the Baptist, something to do with Billy Graham’s son’s organization, they set up camp at the Seashore United Methodist Church there, and I don’t know how many people they have, but they have a whole camp full there, and that’s right down the street from up where I live. You’ll see them walking in the evenings and the mornings, and they just got a setup down there that is unbelievable. I mean, they got as much equipment and supplies down there as you have in a Lowe’s or a Home Depot, and they just hadn’t stopped. Habitat for Humanity, Hands-On USA. Now AmeriCorps, and the Methodists, and the Baptists, the Catholics, it’s just—I’ve never seen anything like that before. I didn’t know they existed.

Sloan: Well, what’s it been like for you to see this, this outpouring?

Holloway: Well, that’s what I said I’ve never seen this before. And Katrina—I mean for Camille we had a few people come here, and mostly Keesler Air Force Base helped. And they helped this time, too, but they really got hit hard out there, too, so they shipped a lot of their personnel out, and they haven’t come back out here. They lost all of their housing out there. But we’ve had cities and towns that would call us and want to adopt us and send us money. And one town from Texas, a 15,000 population, sent us about $20,000. They just had a citywide (inaudible). And we got checks like that from people all over the world, so, just $100, $500, $10. A couple of times I got a one dollar bill in an envelope from people wanting to give but didn’t have it, just give what they could. So it’s been—we wouldn’t be anywhere near where we are today in our recovery without these organizations that we have that’s doing all this work. College kids coming here for weeks or a weekend or a week and then going back, and over their Christmas holidays or spring breaks they were coming here and working the streets and the houses, and cleaning out people’s houses and gutting the Sheetrock off and everything, get the mold out, and washing them down. So it’s just, we just were so thankful that so many people have come. It’s like this all over the Coast; I mean every city, every town.
Sloan: What were your expectations for state and federal response, and I mean, were those met?

Holloway: I’m happy. I think we need to be grateful for the United States of America for the response that the government gave to the City of Biloxi and the State of Mississippi. I think it’s over five billion dollars that we’ve received so far. A lot of people complained and said FEMA wouldn’t do this; FEMA didn’t do that. I don’t have any problem with FEMA. Of course, this is my third hurricane since I’ve been mayor that I’ve been through, and several tropical storms, so we knew how FEMA operates, FEMA and MEMA [Mississippi Emergency Management Agency]. So when—it was right after the storm—a MEMA guy called and said, “I put 25 million dollars in your account for the City.” That was thirty-five, thirty-five. And I think that, I don’t believe any other Cities got anything like that, and that was because of the relationship we’ve had with FEMA and MEMA. They knew that we keep good records. We know what they want. We respect them, and we didn’t criticize them. We didn’t agree with everything, but we go to them, and we talk to them and work it out. They sent that four hundred and something thousand dollars like on our push. The first push was not eligible, and so I just couldn’t understand that. So we went out there and met with them, and showed them and talked to them, told them what happened, and how we did it, and who did it, showed them where we paid them, and so on and so forth. And they worked it out, and they paid the whole thing. So I’m satisfied with the way that the state, FEMA, and MEMA has worked with the City.

Sloan: I know you talked about the insurance you had in place right before the storm and also preparations that had already been in place. I know [Hurricane] Ivan kind of threatened Biloxi.

Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: More than it turned out to be in reality. Do you think that was a, in the long run, was a good thing in that it made you prepare for Katrina a little differently?

Holloway: Yes. I just kept saying that I think we’ve been lucky. I said, “But that luck’s going to run out sooner or later, and we’re going to have to get hit, and we’re going to get a good one. And we’ve been talking about that business interruption insurance for a couple of years, really, and so we decided to take it. We got the premium where we wanted it, and so we went ahead and put it before city council, and I don’t know if we got a seven to zero vote. I believe a couple of them was skeptical of it in paying, I think it was $102,000 or $92,000 premium for that. So it came in handy.

Sloan: Yeah. What’s it paid out?

Holloway: Ten million.

Sloan: Ten million.
Holloway: I base that on the revenue that we received the previous year. From gaming revenue we received about twenty million dollars, and I figured that, knowing the casinos and knowing how they operate, they’re not going to stay [closed]. They’re going to get back open as quick as they can. And so I never dreamed of anything like Katrina. In Ivan we got—I think it was Ivan. What was that other hurricane that we had a few years ago?

Sloan: Before Ivan?

Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: [I don’t know.]

Holloway: I can’t think of the name of it, but it wasn’t Ivan. It was the other hurricane we had several years ago, a small one. A small hurricane, it knocked out the Treasure Bay, knocked out the Grand. Treasure Bay was out for several months, and The Grand was out for about three or fourth months. Treasure Bay was probably out about six months. And so what we did, we based it on the revenue that we received from the last year, and I just cut it in half. I said, “They won’t be closed over six months.” So that’s how we came up with it. And the way it’s supposed to work, say in September, if you had a storm in August, and they was closed for September, well, then that insurance would pay what you got last September. If we got, say, a million dollars, and this September we could get only a hundred thousand dollars, they would make up the difference and up to ten million dollars. So when everything just got wiped out, like it did, they just went ahead and said, “Well, we can give you a seven-million-dollar check now.” And if they saw that we weren’t going to be anywhere near where we were, they went ahead and put in the other three million.

Sloan: Um-hm. So we talked about first priority and the kind of recovery phase was debris removal so you could get vehicles back on the streets. Talk a little bit about how the focus changed the first few weeks. I know, well, debris removal’s still going on.

Holloway: Still going on.

Sloan: As other things started to be adding in that you had to address.

Holloway: Well, we lost over—a hundred employees disappeared. We started trying to build our forces back up, and started trying to get back in operation, get back to a normal routine, which was hard to do. We lost a lot of policemen, and a lot of firemen just left. We had a lot of our police is retired military or comes from the military. They just come over on a lateral transfer, so to speak. They’ve already trained, and they’re just ready to go to work. They don’t have to train, and they can put them on the road right away. And that being so, a lot of them were not from here, and this was their first encounter with a hurricane and storm, and their wives was upset and not
happy, and they wanted to go back to their home, Massachusetts, wherever. And I said Massachusetts because that’s one of them is from. And they went back to where their family was, the mothers of the wife’s mother or whatever. And so we still are not up to where we were from before pre-Katrina. And we’re trying to hire people, but we’re getting applications, but we just can’t hire them because the background checks have not been any good. So it’s hard to find replacements for your fire department and your police department. The laborers were down, way down on them. We’ve been trying to hire about fourteen or fifteen a couple of weeks ago and already about four more quit yesterday. They’re getting paid. We pay around, our entry level is about $10 an hour, nine and a half. And I guess they’re getting more money from these contractors or something, or they just don’t want to work. So that’s been an ongoing problem with us. We lost about twenty City buildings; about five or six of them are historical buildings—the Dantzler House, the Silas(?) House, the Town Green(?), that little house, the Bromar(?) Home down there. Lost two gyms and a senior citizens’ property, the Seafood Museum, the old brick houses; I believe we’re going to be able to save it. In fact, I hired Larry Albertson from Hattiesburg to come look at that and see if he could get it back. And we’re not going to replace all those buildings. We’re going to combine some of the services we had and build new buildings. Biloxi Library, across the street here from city hall, was damaged pretty good. All the heating and air and everything’s gone. Got about four foot of water in there, and so we’ve got to strip down. And I think the Ohr-O’Keefe Museum is going to relocate there. It was originally being built on the beach down there. World-famous architect, Frank Gehry, designed it. We had probably about 75 percent complete with two buildings. It was going to be a five-building complex. And we have so much money tied up in that thing, and it would take so much more to get back up to where it was, but they are estimating over twenty million dollars, so. And FEMA is not going to give them any money. And I don’t know how they’re coming out with the insurance. I think they got some insurance. I don’t know how much, but anyway, I don’t think they’re going to rebuild on the beach. And that’s City property, so the property will come back to the City. And that property adjoins the Tullis Mansion property, so that’ll give us about eight to ten acres on the beach there of valuable, valuable land. I don’t know what we’ll do with it at this time. But we’ll put them over there, and we’re going to move the library, and we’re going to build a new community center at East Biloxi. We was planning on doing that before Katrina. We own the land where a school was, and so it’s probably around five or six acres there. Well, we’re finally building a community center, a three-story building, which was operating on the third floor. This library across the street here was impractical anyway. It took ten employees to where we could’ve operated it if we didn’t have so many blind spots in it. For security reasons and all, we could operate with five people, so we’ll do that. In the old community center, we’re refurbishing it, and it should be going out for bids in about a month now, and in order to bring it all up to code. And it will be a senior citizens’ center. When we finish there, we’ll build the other. And so that building will replace two buildings that we lost on the Point down there, the senior citizens and a gym. And then we will—let’s see what other buildings. We’re working now to buy some property that’s on the beach that’s right next to the property that we owned on the beach, where the Dantzler House was. And the chamber of
commerce office was there, too, on two pieces of property. We’re trying to buy that
and make a lighthouse park there. And another piece of property we’re looking to buy
across the street that’s been an eyesore for years, and the guy that owns it, he uses it
for junkyard. And right on [Highway] 90, right across from the lighthouse there.
That’s the icon of Biloxi is that lighthouse. That’s what gets more pictures than
anything in the city.

**Sloan:** And especially now.

**Holloway:** Yeah.

**Sloan:** So it’s much more important now.

**Holloway:** And so that’s the project that we’re working on, about Reviving the
Renaissance Plan. And also the library is in the Renaissance Plan, too. When I first
looked at it, I didn’t think much about it, and the more I got to thinking about it, the
more sense it made to get out of this building over here because it’s been a mechanical
nightmare since it’s been built. We had to put two roofs on the thing since it’s been
built. So we’ll just fix it up one more time and turn it over to the museum and let them
have it.

**Sloan:** I know the challenge for a lot of Cities right now is acquiring property because
of the property values, what’s happening with property values, and also a kind of a
wait-and-see attitude on the part of a lot of landholders. I mean, has that been true?

**Holloway:** Yes. It’s a lot of landholders. I know that one of them would be willing
to sell down there. The other one would be—we’ll probably have to go to court for
that. But now, people have got a high opinion of their property, nowadays. I think
it’ll finally, sometime, settle down. I don’t know when or how long, but I think it will.
It’s not going to go back to the way it was, basically.

**Sloan:** No, no. Yeah. It’s not going back to there. Let’s go back, and after the
storm, as you think economically, you’ve got to deal with the disaster that’s come, but
also economically you start to try to think about tax revenues, and how do we get the
City back on track economically, and talk a little bit about that. I know a large part of
that is the casinos and in discussions you had with them after the storm and their
resolve, and that sort of thing.

**Holloway:** Well, once we put all of our capital projects on hold, I don’t know how
many we had, but we had several big projects. Carver Street was the biggest we had
going, and we put it on hold, and everything else, until we could see where we were.
Our finances dropped right after the storm with everything being closed or wiped out.
The sales tax was down. It averaged about 25 percent, 25, 30 percent. The property
taxes came in good for [20]06. Now for [20]07, it’s going to be another story. We
think we’re probably going to be down in property taxes probably 25 or 30 percent.
You got a lot of the hotels and motels are gone. The Grand Casino’s gone. The
Magic Casino’s gone. Of course, The President and Broadwater’s gone. Treasure Bay’s gone. Hard Rock won’t pay any taxes till next year. It’s not occupied. So we lost about six thousand homes and businesses that’ll be off the tax revenue. They won’t be completely off because they have your land taxes, but you won’t have your improvements on it, which is about, the biggest part of it was on your improvements of your building. So we figure we’ll be down 25 to 30 percent on that. Gaming taxes are back up to where they were before in 2004. As a matter of fact, September we had the biggest month we ever had in gaming. And October was the best October we ever had. November was the best November we ever had, and December was the best December we ever had. So gaming taxes are coming back good. Even with seven casinos operating, only three of them are at 100 percent. So I think that’s a good sign. I think that shows that we have a strong market here. Now, that’s not a lot of local players. Now, it might be some of these construction workers maybe might be playing in there or something, I don’t know, but I watch cars, tags. If I go anyplace, in the parking lot I always look and see, so I see a lot of out-of-state tags. I’m talking about from as far as Canada to California and Texas, most of them from Georgia and Alabama and Florida.

Sloan: Well, I’m from Texas. We don’t mind taking their money. (laughter) In talks with the casinos after the storm, and I know the legislation was passed pretty quickly to allow them to build on the beach. How important was that, and how did those conversations go? Was there any doubt that the—

Holloway: Well, I asked the governor. Right after the storm, we needed to go into special session and get things on land because I don’t believe that they’re going to build back on the water. If they do, they’re not going to put the money in it that they had in it before. So he called a special session, and we all had meetings and strategized a little. What are we going to do, and how are we going to approach it? And some of them wanted to come in 2,000 feet on shore, and some wanted to come up 100 feet. Some of them didn’t want to come up at all, different people. And so I was working with a couple of groups, and we came back here, and I just took a street, which was First Street, and it’s right where The Grand is there, and it’s the first street off of Howard Avenue. And I just drew a line down that street from Oak Street all the way to the Point down there and went and measured it, and it was about 900 feet. Well, what we did, we said we’d go 800 feet, but we’ll exclude the highway right of way, which is about 125 feet. So that’s how we came up with the 800 feet. And they all went along with that idea, and that’s what we took to Jackson, and we stayed up there for about two weeks. I thought it would be a no-brainer and get out of there in a hurry. Of course, the Secretary of State had to wade in because he was afraid he was going to lose some money for him (inaudible) those leases, so we had to work a deal with him and keep him happy. And but everybody we didn’t. Some people had to vote against it, and we didn’t care as long as we had enough. They worked with us, and when they had to vote, they had to vote with their constituents, what their decision was. So anyway, we got it passed. As I said it took about two weeks with a lot of talking and a lot of working. I don’t know how those lobbyists do that. That’s one job I couldn’t do. That’s a hard job. Hard job. But anyway, we got it done, and the
governor signed it right away. Then we went to work. The Beau Rivage stayed on the water. Boomtown stayed on the water and IP [Imperial Palace]. IP was the first to open. They’d come back in about December 15, somewhere around there. They opened up. And then others opened up before Christmas. So it’s been going pretty good since then with the casinos. They’re building their rooms back. I believe the Beau’s got all its rooms up. IP’s got all its rooms up. That’s 1850 over here and 1100 back there. And the Isle’s got to be 701, and the Palace has got two hundred and something. And I don’t know how many Treasure Bay has, or how many they’ve got. They’re redoing the whole hotel, so I don’t know what they’re looking at in rooms in there or not. But then a lot of the hotel rooms—I think Biloxi had right around 10,000 rooms, in Biloxi. We’re probably like 55 percent up now, open. And that’s where your condos are going. Anyplace where these little, small mom-and-pop hotels and motels were, that’s where most of your condo developments are going. Some of the motels are building back, some of them. I think Holiday Inn is not. I believe it was washed away. Some of the small ones are going back. When they had their 100 rooms or 75, 80 rooms, they might be working with 40 now in trying to get those back. So that’s mostly our sales tax, was in hospitality, hotel, motel, restaurant. The Olive Garden, Ruby Tuesdays, O’Charley’s, and Hooters, don’t look like they’re coming back. We haven’t gotten anything from them. And I think what it is, is a lot of that property were just land leases, and either the real estate has gone up on the lease, and the insurance is out of sight. So they just could probably wait and see what happens. If they can renegotiate a lease and they could get reasonable insurance and the cost of buildings come down, they might come back, but I think as it stands right now, I doubt if any of them will be building back any time soon. And that was, I think, the only one that’s come to me that’s not going back down there. And they’re having trouble with their landlord. [What] was the little restaurant right over here, served the breakfast? What’s the name of those things? Waffle House.

Sloan: Waffle House, yeah.

Holloway: Waffle House was opened here, and they had two on the beach, one on each side, and the one on the land side was in here and said they was coming back. They was also talking about the beach side. They own both of them. They, I understand, have been bought out on the beach side, so I don’t know. The mall’s up. Most of their stores are in with the exception of Dillard’s. It’s not back yet. I don’t know when it—they’re coming back. They got a building permit, but they haven’t done anything yet. So I think it’ll be several years before the beach finally decides what it’s going to do.

Sloan: As part of—

Holloway: Got a lot of for-sale signs out there.

Sloan: Yeah, there are a lot of for-sale signs. What was unusual about Mississippi experiences is very quickly there was talk about rebuilding and how to rebuild and the governor’s commission, and we all learned a new word—charrette.
Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: And so talk a little bit about how you got involved in that and what that process was like.

Holloway: Well, I attended most of those sessions, not all of them. This New Urbanist idea is a good idea. They always, they say, “Well, you got a clean slate. You can start over now. You can do what you want.” You can’t. We don’t have a clean slate here. We got people that are on these lots down here that might want to live back on them, but not many of them are right now, but it’s still private property. Now, you got a forty-acre piece of land, which we do have. We got one project that’s going to be a New Urbanist sort of mixed-use area that’s about 1100 acres. Part of it’s in the city limit; part of it’s out of it. We’re talking with them right now and working with them. And we have another one—now, that can be the charrette deal there. We have another about fifty acres behind the coast coliseum that one person owns all of it. He’s looking at some mixed-use retail condo, not any single family but low-rise condos and townhouses, and a lot of retail. That project he’s working, trying to develop, trying to get people or businesses located. He has a development like that in Baton Rouge, and I went over there, and we looked at it. It’s real nice, and it would be a big hit here. Those type of projects are fine and dandy. But just say that you can rebuild. We can give them guidelines. Well, we’re going to do a new, comprehensive plan, and first thing we do with a comprehensive plan is they do an extensive survey. And we also, in that survey, we’re going to go a step further and this fellow we’re getting to do it—you know Vern Kennedy?

Sloan: Um-hm.

Holloway: Vern’s going to do it; he did one for New Orleans—located the people, then left, and call them or get in touch with them some kind of way and see what their plans are, if they’re planning on coming back to Biloxi, and if they’re planning on staying where they are. I think we need to know that.

Sloan: That’s a big question right now.

Holloway: Yeah. I don’t know how many are away. I know a lot of them. I know a lot of them have moved to Alabama. I know several families that moved over to Foley, Alabama, over there. And I know some of them that moved back up further in Harrison County and Jackson County and built new houses, or either bought a house up there. They’re not coming back. So. And most of them, old property’s still in there, and they don’t know if they even got it up for sale, or they don’t know what they’re going to do with it right now. So. And when we get this comprehensive plan, that’ll face a lot of issues that we’re facing right now. See, right now, the (inaudible) development ordinance, the smallest lot you could have is 5,000 square feet to build on. Well, we got a lot of lots down here in East Biloxi that’s not 5,000 square feet. Some lots down here are only 35 foot or 40 foot by 50 by 60. What they did, they
put—just cut slices off a little piece of land that was next to your daddy’s, and you built a house on it. And your daddy would give you that land. And that’s how it got all chopped up like that, and he put little shotgun houses on it. Well, a lot of those are gone, and a lot of them were rental properties, and the owners of the rental property—I’ve talked to a couple of those people, and they can’t build back. I mean they’ve been renting those places for seventy-five, eighty years, and they were getting two hundred and fifty dollars a month, and they can’t build back and rent for that now. So they got the property up for sale, but again they’re asking casino prices. Everybody wants casino prices. And so I don’t know where those people are. The only thing I’m kind of gauging the population on is the school population, and we’re down about 25 percent from where we started in 2004, or ended in 2004.

Sloan: I know that’s your background here in Biloxi, and that’s one of the real success stories and recoveries, how quick the schools got back.

Holloway: It was back in nineteen days after the storm.

Sloan: It’s unbelievable.

Holloway: Except for two of them, and they just put those in other schools and scattered them out. Those two are open now, so we got them all back.

Sloan: So like you said you can only kind of influence and give direction. I mean, you can’t control these landowners, and so how do you try to, what do you do to convince them to buy into, like Reviving the Renaissance, which I know is the plan that in some ways, I guess I’ve seen it described as kind of a realistic plan whereas, you mentioned the Governor’s Commission Report. It’s not a blank slate, so we’ve got to do something different, that really we can do, that’s more realistic. I mean, what do you do to try to get them to buy into that?

Holloway: Well, not much that we can do. I mean, the problem we’re facing now in the elevation, the city council had never adopted the elevation from FEMA. So if they don’t have a elevation that they have to build to, and they lost their house to flood and they got this—what is it, SSI [Social Security Insurance] insurance for $30,000. They can’t get that, so a lot of people are not building because they’re waiting. They’re going to have to adopt it, the advisory flood elevation, in order to get insurance, in order to get financed, so that’s got everything stymied right there.

Sloan: Why the delay on accepting elevation?

Holloway: Well, you got two councilmen from the east end here that are dead set against it. Their people want to go back right where they were, but they’re not doing it. They ought to realize they’re not doing it. Just a few of them are building them, and so the other ones are going along with them, too. I brought it up twice, and it’s just failed two times. I believe a four-to-three vote; it was.
Sloan: Is it because they feel the elevations are too high?

Holloway: Too high.

Sloan: Too high and it would limit the rebuilding and what they can do in rebuilding.

Holloway: Yeah. I think they’re recommending possibly eighteen feet. I think FEMA came back with eighteen, nineteen. Right now it’s at thirteen, which is what we adopted. They have to build thirteen feet. So that’s what’s holding a lot of people back right now.

Sloan: Yeah. I know elevation and insurance, those are the two big issues. And so what has been—I kind of know where we are now, but talk about that struggle of getting reinsured, and settlements with the insurance companies.

Holloway: Well, I didn’t have surge water in my home. I had it in a couple of buildings that I owned. But after I get a building paid for, I don’t insure it. Now, I self-insure it. And so I had my home insured and a couple of other buildings I had, which didn’t get much damage. Now, my home did, like the roof blewed off of it, and rainwater got in the upstairs and come down to the walls and downstairs, but not too bad. Speaking about insurance now, my wife called me one day and said, “The adjuster’s here.” By the time I left here and got home, he was pulling out the driveway. So. But we just figured he’d be back. (laughter) Well, he never did come back, and then so a few days or a few weeks or so we got a check for $6,000. Well, hell, my roof cost $12,500. So I hired a public adjuster that a lot of people have, and came out with a settlement with the insurance company, and mine went from $21,000 to $64,000, after that public adjuster coming there. And they sent another adjuster down, and they worked together, and that’s what they came with. So I’m just now—as a matter of fact, there should be somebody working on my floor today, putting a new floor in upstairs. But that’s what a lot of people don’t know what to do until—my mother, for instance, and she would not have—of course, she’s pretty tough. (laughter) She’s not going to let them get away with anything. Me and my brother had to help them with the insurances. But that’s what a lot of people—when my brother, for instance, he lost his whole house. I mean, he only had a slab left. I think he’s with Allstate. Yeah. And he hadn’t settled yet. His is in a lawsuit. Of course, he, I mean, he had the flood insurance. He had $250,000 in flood insurance, and he got that right away, no problem. But the wind is (inaudible). So he had enough money so he could draw enough credit where he found him a house that he liked, and they moved in it, bought it. Then he’s got his lot up for sale. But there’s a lot, there’s thousands of people like that out there.

Sloan: Yeah. I know housing has been the key issue, and I don’t know if you know how many people you have in FEMA trailers now or—

Holloway: Well, we did have, I believe, about 1800, I think, is what we got in the city, 2200, 1800. That’s what we had. I don’t know what it is now.
Sloan: Um-hm. I know they’re trying to, or they’re thinking this spring they’re going to be moving in these Mississippi cottages, Katrina cottages.

Holloway: Well, that’s just like a damn trailer.

Sloan: Yeah.

Holloway: You know? I mean it might be a little stronger, but it’s still going to sit there and (inaudible) they’re not going to get out of them. They got free rent. And I don’t mind extending the FEMA trailers for another year, but it’s got to stop because the people are just not doing anything. Now, maybe they can’t, but I know one particular person that got a good settlement on the insurance, got a good amount of money from FEMA, and so forth, and he’s living in a trailer. He’s not even concerned about rebuilding his house; bought a new car, though.

Sloan: (laughter) Got a nice car outside the FEMA trailer.

Holloway: Yeah. That’s what a lot of them did.

Sloan: We talked about the casinos coming back, and what about other industry? I know fishing is suffering. And what about other industries as far as how you see that coming back?

Holloway: Well, you know Biloxi is—I say every city along the Coast has their own niche. Pascagoula, Jackson County has heavy industry. Gulfport’s mixed-sales tax on [Highway] 49 are big box stores, and they have all new, two car dealers. Biloxi has one new car dealer. That’s all. They have a strong sales tax base and plus the Industrial Seaway there. Biloxi has the hospitality. Fishing is a good business, and it’s not like it used to be year round. It’s seasonal now. You don’t have the oyster factories we used to have. We don’t have the crab factories we used to have. We have shrimp, and that’s it. And we had about seven processing plants before Katrina, and I think we’re down to three now. And a lot of the fishermen or the factory owners’ children are not going into the business like they did. They can’t assume their daddy’s only business. They took it over, but the younger generation is doing something else. So when these guys are getting up like me in that age, they got an opportunity to sell to the casino for several million dollars, they’re going to do it. And that’s what happened to the fishing industry. I want to say what we have here. I’m talking to casino operators that want to buy the City’s property, and I’m going to buy it, and I won’t sell it. I’ll lease it. And where we have our lighthouse fishing dock, we’ve got about forty-five boats there. I told them the boats have to stay, or you’re going to have to build another place for them or buy another place for them because we’re going to keep them. If you lose the boats, I believe you lose the people there, the Vietnamese. And they’ve been a part of Biloxi now since the [19]70s. And they’re mostly good people. You got some bad ones. They’ve got some of these gangs, but most of them are good, hardworking people. I believe this year, it’s the
first time I can remember that the Vietnamese wasn’t a valedictorian of the high school. They’re always in the top, most of them are at the top of their classes. And they’re going off and coming back as doctors, dentists.

Sloan: Always back to this community, yeah.

Holloway: And there are pharmacists. So we want to keep that culture that they have. So our other big employer is Keesler Air Force Base. What’s happening out at Keesler now is that they have relocated a lot of their personnel, particularly the military people, and familywise they don’t have any place to live, so they moved them to other bases and so forth. If one comes back in here now, it’s called a “remote assignment.” And probably that’s where, probably 10 percent or maybe 15 percent of school kids are, too, with Keesler. But I think all the civilian jobs are still out there with the exception of the ones that worked in the commissary and the NCO [noncommissioned officer] clubs and others. All those are gone. So the others who’ve done other jobs are missing out there, too, come to think about it.

Sloan: But you get a sense of commitment to rebuild Keesler.

Holloway: Oh, yeah. Yeah, Keesler’s coming back. They’ve already got the money and everything, I think it’s right around a billion dollars. They got billed—this is a just a good example. I was telling my wife the other day; I was talking to the general. They’re going to build back 2,000 homes, I believe. It’s going to take them four to five years to do it. And they already have the land and the money, and it’s still going to take them four to five years to do that. Maybe six or seven. And then have people expect us to build back in a year, two years. I was at a meeting the other day, and they was talking about having to build back, need to be build seven or eight, ten thousand houses a year. Well, that’s impossible. Impossible, I believe. But that’s what some people think. It’s not easy getting back. This is not an easy job. Some people can sit up there and say, “Well, we need to do this, and we need to do that.” But it’s not easy to. You’re talking about people’s lives and futures.

Sloan: Yeah. As you go out and you drive around the city now, do you see some new starts?

Holloway: Oh yeah, yeah.

Sloan: What’s the most encouraging view that you see?

Holloway: Well, I got mixed feelings about East Biloxi here. I don’t think some areas should be rebuilt. People don’t like to hear that, but it’d been wiped out and wiped out, and below sea level. And you can ride around and you can see where you’re getting (inaudible) like that. But I’m not going to stop them. I can’t stop them if they want to build back on their land. But the casinos are going to buy everything they can, and I think we’re going to have some more casinos come in here. There’s two that might could possibly be able to start construction this year. That’s Bicarin(?)
Bay and another on the Back Bay, back there. They’re getting all their permits and stuff. And I understand one of him has got his finances, and the other one is just a little bit away from getting all of his financials together. And I think we’ll continue to see on East Biloxi the casinos going, and as they go I think they’ll buy up a lot of the lands and properties around them, and making people millionaires, if you got enough land.

Sloan: As I drove down this morning, I know this morning the city council’s not too happy with you. I know you said you’re going to work it out, but the issue of—because I know from that, there was a veto of a development that was outside of code of two hundred feet.

Holloway: Had a two-hundred-foot variance.

Sloan: A two-hundred-foot variance, and I know you vetoed it because you wanted to keep, because that is a substantial variance, of course, over what the code is. So that raises the question of, in rebuilding there’s such a need for new development. So in rebuilding, how do you still keep a vision toward how we want to keep Biloxi?

Holloway: Yeah. Well, even though I kind of struggled with that veto, I didn’t—the 200-foot variance just seemed like it was just too much to me, but we have others that was already given the variance, like the Broadwater and the Beau View on the Back Bay back there. I think the Broadwater’s such a big project, such a big mass of land there is one reason, I think, we went along with that. We didn’t have any opposition to it, and we didn’t have any opposition to the other ones, but we had a lot of opposition to this one. And I can live with 275 foot. Going back next door to the Beau View is 269, so I can probably live with the 275. But that’s when I said, that’s talking about that comprehensive plan. And as I said on the radio, what percentage is really concerned about that? I mean, all the neighborhood around there was. That’s what made my decision. Most of the neighborhood was calling me, e-mailing me, but that’s just a small percentage of the total population. And of course the other variances was in the [waterfront] districts, which is waterfront casino, which is a higher height anyway than the 175. I think it is, in the (inaudible). So I think that with the survey we need to address that, see where they want height, where they don’t want height. You could have, I think you could have a mix. I think you could have low-rises, and I think you could have high-rises. I think the East Biloxi could be high-rise. If you got two on each end, you have 330 feet. And I don’t know what the Grand or the Beau—I mean the Isle of Capri, they’re well over 200. So if we get some development over there on the Back Bay and they go up high, as long as they don’t pierce that fly-over of Keesler’s patterns, well, we can make it, we can go up.

Sloan: I guess you’re eight months out or seven months out from having finished the Reviving the Renaissance Plan. And are you happy with how that turned out? Do you feel like it’s a plan that’s still a realistic goal?

Holloway: Yeah.
Sloan: Um-hm. What are some elements of that, I guess, you look forward to the most implementing?

Holloway: Well, we’ve got three good projects we’re working on right now. One of them I can’t say anything about. It’s just going to have to get some land from people, and it’s not going to be easy, and I don’t know if it’ll work or not. But anyway, we want to build these. I want to do that Lighthouse Park, is what we call it now. That was one of the recommendations from the Reviving the Renaissance. We got to get that community center back open, and then we want to get started on the new community center. We got the marinas. We’re getting ready to put up advertising for repairing those, replace them. That needs to be done. And we got charter boat people losing their boats and losing business and not getting any business in the last couple of years on it. We got to get them back up and running. We got to get some housing done. The housing authority is getting (inaudible) for forty-one million dollars. They hadn’t gotten it yet, but they’ve been sent word that’s what they’re going to be getting from HUD. They got some land that they’ve been trying to sell, and they’re putting back the Hope Six Project. We need to get it back. That was just that close from being 100 percent completed.

Sloan: Such an elite project.

Holloway: Yeah. And so if we get those two things. The senior citizens’ housing is getting ready to open on Maple Street down there, and that means eighty units there. And we got several, several apartment complexes that’s getting ready to get up. And I believe once we see that and get some housing, we’ll see people coming back and coming in and get some more workers.

Sloan: I know, also, the goal and the plan was a little more open space or using open space as—

Holloway: Well, that’s what I was talking about down in the Point down there, where they had the sort of like Central Park there. The first thing somebody said, “Well, that’s my house right there. What the hell you mean you’re going to have a park there?” (laughter) But that’s what we’re going to do with the Lighthouse down there. And that could be a nice complex when we get it the way we want it. Let’s see. This is where the Lighthouse is, and what we want to do is move that to the—this is probably more about right here. We want to move that back that way a little bit and move this up this way to get some more room in that neutral ground there. And people can go into that Lighthouse.

Sloan: In the median there.

Holloway: In the median. And then this park, this is over here. We want to go this whole strip of land here that’s nothing but a damn junkyard. And then we want to come back up here. They got another poorhouse convent. I want to try to get right
here and turn it into something right away whether it be the chamber of commerce or
something that we had to—we had the Mardi Gras Museum here, the old Dantzler
House. And then we’ll have this here. This is a big sway that comes down through
here, that drains a big section of the city back up here, and it comes back underneath it
and comes out in the Gulf there. We’re going to leave that open and clean it out and
put a bridge across it and add some playgrounds up here and just parking down here.
And then we’re going to put something over here. (phone rings) Excuse me. (brief
interruption)

Sloan: I know I’m running long on time, but I want to ask you to do something hard
for a minute here for me. (laughter)

Holloway: Yeah.

Sloan: As you think about how ultimately this storm is going to change your city,
when you think long-term, I mean looking at Biloxi ten, fifteen years from now, and
thinking about what the legacy is going to be and the way it changed the city and what
Biloxi is. Can you talk about some thoughts about that?

Holloway: Well, I think Biloxi’s going to be changing pretty rapidly, pretty soon. I
mean there’s a few things—when I said earlier that Biloxi has a niche, I look to see
eighteen to twenty gaming operations in the City of Biloxi, in the east section of
Biloxi. I don’t want to see going up to the west beach (inaudible). I’m trying to find
the right word. But anyway, where you have all the casinos on this peninsula down
here. And that could be 30,000 jobs, thirty-five maybe, probably fifteen to 20,000
hotel rooms. And I think that’s where the future of Biloxi is, that they’re good-paying
jobs, a lot of husband/wife teams, working in these casinos make pretty good money.
And if that happens, I think you’ll see some development in that area with apartment
complexes, gated, nice apartment complexes, probably some more condo or
condo/hotels in those areas. And that’ll be about what you’ll have down there. Then
you’ll see the City of Biloxi business district retail sales, I think, going down into that
area, too. Then, I mean, people in this Biloxi will do what they’re doing now. A lot
of them—we had a lot of retired people in Biloxi, retired from Keesler Air Force Base,
retired from the military and moved back here. A lot of them live in the Sunkist area.
Probably that will continue; that trend will continue. Of course, Biloxi is trapped in
right now. We probably at 85 percent of our land is occupied. We don’t have a whole
lot of the land left, so Biloxi’s going to have to move. Of course we had annexed the
Woolmarket area several years ago. We’re talking about another annexation right
now. And I wasn’t thinking about it until D’Iberville started making a move. Then I
had to make a move to protect our growth to the north. And that area that I was
talking about with 1100 acres in it, we’re going to annex that, too. So that’s when
Biloxi’s going to be growing. Yeah. The only thing we’re lacking right now is water
and sewer, mostly sewer. Well, that’s going to be taken care of with, very shortly.
We got some money. The governor’s got five hundred, 650 million dollars that’s
going to go to five coastal counties for that infrastructure of water and sewer. And we
got an emergency appropriation of ten million dollars to be used in Harrison County, which is Woolmarket and (inaudible) for wastewater treatment facilities.

**Sloan:** You had tossed around a little bit of metrogovernment. Do you see things like that, but is it going to have bring in more municipal cooperation in getting—

**Holloway:** Probably so. This is what has turned into be a regional wastewater authority, and I don’t have any problem with shared services. I don’t think you’d ever see a metrogovernment, but who knows?

**Sloan:** Well, you’ve got eleven different municipalities, all very different histories and industries and things like that.

**Holloway:** Um-hm.

**Sloan:** Well, anything else that I should’ve asked you?

**Holloway:** Well, you did a pretty good job. (laughter)

**Sloan:** Well, thank you again so much for sitting down with me and doing this.

**Holloway:** All right.

(end of interview)