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GRETNA AT A GLANCE

Helen Williams

A special treat for seniors

Gretna Police Chief Arthur Lawson Jr. and his wife, Brenda Lawson, recently opened their

Top 10 stories that shaped the year

Crescent City Connection toll drama tops list

By **Andrea Shaw**
Staff writer

The West Bank was ground zero for a number of high profile stories in 2013. Topics that seemed to draw the most interest were transportation and politics, with the two often intertwined. Crime also remained at the top, perhaps metrowide, spurred by the murders

of numerous children in New Orleans and Jefferson.

West Bank residents led the charge to eliminate tolls on the Crescent City Connection, which was plunged into darkness for days over a dispute about funding for the decorative lighting. Algiers-Canal Street ferry operations were reduced and the Gretna ferry eliminated altogether, while the Regional Transit Authority's operator worked on a plan to keep the boats running. The Huey P. Long Bridge opened to much fanfare after a \$1.2 billion makeover.

Meanwhile, the Jefferson Parish Council wrapped up its final public hearing this week on the future of the public hospitals,

which are seeking a private partner. Officials with West Jefferson Medical Center and East Jefferson General Hospital say with new federal regulations and declining reimbursements, they need an ally to help them compete in the rapidly changing health care market.

Here is a look at some of the West Bank's major headlines in 2013. Do you agree? Which stories are missing?

► Crescent City Connection tolls eliminated. After a 2012 referendum barely passed, extending tolls for 20 years, Harvey activist Mike Teachworth sued challenging the outcome, alleging voter irregularities. In March, a Baton Rouge judge nullified

the vote and ordered a new election in May. Toll collections were immediately suspended following the March 5 ruling, and voters in Orleans, Jefferson and Orleans parishes overwhelmingly rejected the measure two months later. But the drama didn't end there, the decorative lights on the bridge were turned off for nearly two weeks and drivers received citations for three-year-old violations that could be settled through an amnesty program. Thousands of violations were sent to the state Attorney General's office for collection.

► Jefferson Parish public hospitals seek suitor. Citing increased federal regulations and declining

reimbursements, West Jefferson Medical Center and East Jefferson General Hospital boards are seeking a partner to lease the institutions to help stay competitive. But the two hospital boards could not decide on an operator, leaving the final decision up to the Parish Council. The last of two public hearings on the issue concluded this week.

► RTA operator Veolia considers operating ferries. On July 1, the ferries lost their funding, which reduced operation hours for the Algiers-Canal Street ferry and shelved the Gretna line altogether. Veolia Transportation and the state Transportation

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