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# Kanawha County will continue paying prevailing wage

By Rusty Marks

Members of the Kanawha County Commission are expected to vote Tuesday to keep paying prevailing wage rates for all county construction projects.

In March, the Legislature passed a bill eliminating prevailing wage rates for public construction projects of less than \$500,000. But Kanawha County Commission President Kent Carper said that doesn't mean the county has to go along with the change.

"We're going to set our own policy," Carper said Monday. "We believe we are not bound by the act of the Legislature."

Carper and fellow county commissioners Dave Hardy and Hoppy Shores are expected to vote Tuesday on a policy keeping prevailing wage rates for all county construction projects.

Hardy said most of the county's projects are more than \$500,000 anyway. But he wants the same standards and expectations to apply to any construction work done on the county's dime.

"I've been very happy with the quality of work that's been done on county projects," Hardy said. "They've been safe, they've been on-budget, and they've been finished ahead of schedule."

Hardy also asked for discussion of West Virginia American Water's request for a 28 percent rate increase. Hardy issued a press release Monday criticizing the request, which he said will be too much for county residents on fixed incomes and create a hardship for businesses that use a lot of water.

Even if water company officials are asking for 28 percent in hopes of getting a smaller rate increase, the increase is still too much, Hardy said.

"We've got to stop thinking if they ask for 28 percent and get a 10 percent increase that it's a victory," Hardy said. "It's not a victory."

Shores could not be reached for comment on Monday.

Critics of doing away with prevailing wage rates have argued the move hurts local contractors and workers and opens the door to out-of-state workers -- including illegals -- who are willing to work for less, but may not do as good a job.

Carper said he doesn't want to take that chance with county money.

"If it's a real work project, we want local workers," Carper said. "I absolutely oppose bringing out-of-state workers here that don't pay taxes in Kanawha County, who do shoddy work and then leave," he said.

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