

EDITORIAL: End justifies city's means in Baby J's case

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When a judge says your case “stinks,” it’s a safe bet that you probably didn’t win.

However, in [the recent court showdown](#) with a popular floating restaurant, even though the city clearly lost the first round, the process emerged victorious.

In short, the system worked.

While admitting no wrongdoing, Baby J's seems to be “correcting” the so-called “life-safety violations” that prompted the city to try to shut down the establishment through a court injunction last month. The city maintained that it had tried to get Baby J's up to code for months, but instead was being stonewalled.

Baby J's attorney Dana Matthews says the restaurant/bar has installed a kitchen hood and stockpiled fire extinguishers. They are even working to provide another route off the boat in case of fire. The new staircase will be a far safer option than the jump-in-the-harbor plan that was suggested by some employees [in a letter to The Log](#).

Sure, we join others in the online peanut gallery who say the city staff should have included the item in [the July 20 agenda](#). Instead, they basically blindsided Baby J's in a public forum that they didn't even know they should attend.

But while we hate to see things degenerate into another costly court battle, sometimes a legal kick in the pants is what's necessary to get things done.

We do hope, however, that the courtroom drama ends here. The city should sit down with Baby J's — sans lawyers — and work through its punch list. For its part, Baby J's should open its doors to city/fire inspectors and think very hard before counter-suing the city for damages that likely don't exist.

After Judge Keith Brace blocked the city's motion and accused Destin of taking its “sweet time” in the case, Matthews characterized the judge's ruling as a scolding to the city.

And maybe it was, but at least the judicial tongue-lashing ultimately led to results instead of lip service.