REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2014 AT 5:00 P.M.

Meeting called to order by Council President Thomas.

Present: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.

Absent: None.

The meeting was opened with prayer by Rev. Gary Houston of New Hope Blackwater MB Church and followed by the pledge to the flag.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Henson duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to confirm the agenda for this meeting with an amendment to: add an executive session regarding litigation and personnel issues after comments; switch R-8 and R-9; add as R-12 a resolution to concur with the Board of Supervisor’s request for local & private legislation in regard to Cleveland Properties contingent upon receiving a copy of the resolution from the County; remove R-2.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to approve the minutes dated March 04, 2014.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to approve the following proclamations to be issued by the Mayor:
  March 29, 2014 – “Madeline’s Drive – Catch The Bus”

Councilwoman Henson offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #15606 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF VENUE USE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

And, Councilwoman Houston seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.
Nay: None.

Councilwoman Houston offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Ordinance:

ORDIN. #4431 ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY’S SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE
And, Councilman Hammon seconded the motion, whereupon said Ordinance was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.
Nay: None.

Councilwoman Houston offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #15607 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF QUARTERLY ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND MISSISSIPPI ELEVATOR, LLC

And, Councilwoman Henson seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.
Nay: None.

Councilwoman Henson offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #15608 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING SERVICES CONTRACT BETWEEN THOMPSON ENGINEERING, INC. AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (HIGHWAY 39 SIGNALIZATION PROJECT) SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

And, Councilwoman Houston seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.
Nay: None.

Councilman Hammon offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #15609 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF GENERAL RELEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND PAUL BROADHEAD, JR.

And, Councilman Markham seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the
Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.
Nay: None.

Councilwoman Houston offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #15610 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF RELEASE BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND MISSISSIPPI POWER COMPANY (DAMAGE CAUSED TO SILT PONDS AT BONITA LAKES)

And, Councilman Markham seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.
Nay: None.

At this time discussion was held regarding a hearing officer for the Civil Service Commissioners’ hearing. City Attorney Goggans said he had been given the names of two attorneys in Meridian to see if they could serve as the hearing officer. He met with them and they advised him that they felt there was a conflict. The Mayor created a list of three (3) people while meeting with him and a couple of local attorneys. They are mediators and arbitrators who could be considered for the hearing officer: Bobby Dallas, Bobby Sneed and Constance Slaughter-Harvey. Councilman Markham said at the last agenda meeting they discussed hiring a hearing officer and he and Councilman Thomas communicated their choices. They asked that someone be brought to them today to be confirmed at this meeting. Right now, Civil Service is not functioning. The city needs the Civil Service Commission to function for the city employees’ benefit. Mayor Bland stated that last week they discussed two local attorneys. He was advised Monday that they could not do it. They discussed other attorneys and mediators locally and across the state who could possibly serve and created the list of three names given to them – Bobby Dallas, Bobby Sneed and Constance Slaughter-Harvey. All of them are mediators and attorneys in Mississippi who would be a fair and unbiased hearing officer so they can move forward and get this done. Councilman Thomas asked if anyone could give them some information on these people. Councilwoman Houston said she knows Mrs. Slaughter-Harvey and she is a fine attorney and she feels she would do a good job. Councilman Markham asked if any of them have agreed to do this. Mayor Bland stated that Attorney Goggans will be contacting them to see when each of them could get to this. He said they would then get the one who can get to it sooner. Councilman Markham said they want to have the hearing as soon as possible and had planned on the first of April. Attorney Goggans said unless the hearing officer is appointed today or at a special called meeting, the hearing could not be handled that early. Councilman Hammon suggested that they call a special meeting for later this week. He said they need to get background information on the people so they can take action later this week. Council-man Markham suggested that they get with the attorneys for both sides to see when they can be ready for this hearing. President Thomas said he would like to get background information on these people before a decision is made. They can recess this meeting today for a time later this week.

Discussion was held at this time regarding seasonal part-time employees. Councilman Hammon asked if
any of these go through Civil Service. CAO McGrevey said they are not under Civil Service as they are seasonal part-time workers. Councilwoman Houston asked if those applying for these jobs are the same ones who have worked these jobs before or if they are new ones. Mr. McGrevey stated that some of them are return workers such as lifeguards. There will probably be 20 or 25 returning lifeguards. Human Resources Director Chrissie Walker stated that anyone seeking part-time employment with the city goes to Human Resources and fills out an application. They then send the applications to the appropriate department. After they are chosen then the applicant has to pass the drug screening and other stuff prior to being hired. Civil Service is not involved in any of this. President Thomas stated he had no problem with the ground maintenance workers, lifeguards, carousel workers and concession workers. He has problems with the labor supervisor, equipment operators and general maintenance/utility workers. Public Works Director Hugh Smith stated that during the budget cycle the City Council allotted the department funds to purchase needed equipment. These seasonal part-time employees are not Civil Service covered positions. They will be working part-time doing grass cutting, etc. for a certain number of months. He said he is looking at from April to October and that is depending on the growing season. Councilman Thomas stated he was not going to vote for that. Councilman Hammon asked if the salaries for these part-time positions were already in the budget. He was advised that they were. Councilman Markham offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #15611 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE HIRING OF SEASONAL, PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

And, Councilman Hammon seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.
Nay: Thomas.

Councilwoman Houston offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Resolution:

RESO. #5891 RESOLUTION APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE AMENDED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2014 AND DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK IN REFERENCE THERETO

And, Councilman Markham seconded the motion, whereupon said Resolution was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon.
Nay: None.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Henson duly seconded by Councilman Markham and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve the Claims Docket dated March 13, 2014 in the amount of $2,786,295.57. Voting yea: Markham, Henson, Houston, Hammon. Voting nay: Thomas.
Next on the agenda was a resolution for local & private legislation regarding Cleveland Properties. Attorney Goggans stated he had not received a copy of this resolution, therefore, no action was taken.

President Thomas called on Mayor Bland for his report. He thanked Kelvin McGruder. He commented on the softball tournament held at Northeast Park this past weekend. He introduced Mike Clymer with the Meridian High School Academic Team. They won the tournament at Mississippi College. Mr. Clymer introduced the members of the team. Mayor Bland presented Ricky Hood with a proclamation for National Boys & Girls Club Week and presented a proclamation to Madeline Griffin for Madeline’s Drive – Catch The Bus.

President Thomas called for citizen comments. Those who signed up to speak were: 1) Dedria J. Haguewood – was not present; 2) Ruth H. Jones.

President Thomas called for Council comments. Various comments were made. Council discussed a date and time to recess this meeting until. They decided on Friday, March 28th at 8:30 a.m. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to add R-2 back to the agenda so it could be discussed at the recessed meeting.

President Thomas advised an executive session was requested for personnel matters regarding salaries and pending litigation. Attorney Goggans advised the Council that they could not discuss salaries during an executive session, therefore, the executive session was requested for pending litigation only. Motion was made by Councilwoman Henson duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to close the meeting to determine whether to declare an executive session. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilwoman Henson and unanimously passed by the Council to declare an executive session in order to discuss pending litigation. The Council then went into executive session. Motion was made by Councilman Markham duly seconded by Councilman Hammon and unanimously passed by the Council to go out of executive session.

President Thomas called the regular meeting back to order. No action was taken regarding the executive session.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, the meeting was recessed until Friday, March 21, 2014 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam McInnis, Clerk of Council