REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 2017 AT 5:00 P.M.

Meeting called to order by Council President Houston.

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

Absent: None.

The meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor Odell Hopkins, of West Mt. Moriah Baptist Church and followed by the pledge to the flag.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to confirm the agenda with amendments: Amending the claims docket by removing payment of $5,620,575.62 and adding a payment of $122,000.00. Add R-7) Order moving the Council meeting location to Union Station on May 2 & 16, 2017 and June 6, 2017. Add R-8) Order authorizing signers to execute loan documents for the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF). Remove Ricky Hood from the presentation agenda-he cancelled. Remove Executive Session concerning pending litigation.

Motion was made by Councilman Markham duly seconded by Councilwoman Henson and unanimously passed by the Council to approve the minutes dated April 04, 2017.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman Henson to discuss R-1) Order approving and adopting Neighborhood Market Commercial Subdivision and accepting infrastructure. After discussion, a motion was made by Councilman Markham and duly seconded by Councilwoman Henson and unanimously passed by the Council to table the item.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman Henson to discuss R-2) Order approving the plat of agreement with the Mississippi Transportation Commission and authorizing execution of Memorandum of Understanding – 33rd Street Relocation. After discussion, a motion was made by Councilman Markham and duly seconded by Councilwoman Henson and unanimously passed by the Council to table the item.

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

ORDER #16316 IN THE MATTER OF: ACCEPTING THE BID OF CROSS ROOFING, INC., MERIDIAN, MS FOR THE ART MUSEUM ROOF REPLACEMENT IN THE AMOUNT OF $70,500.00 AND AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF CONTRACT
And, Councilman Thomas 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 Markham offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #16317  ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF CHANGE ORDER NO. 2 BETWEEN HEMPHILL CONSTRUCTION CO. AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (WWTP PROCESS MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL UPGRADES)

And, Councilman Thomas 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 Thomas offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Resolution:

RESO. #6114  RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CONTRIBUTION/EXPENDITURE OF $1,000,000 FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN’S MUSEUM-MERIDIAN

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

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

Motion was made by Councilwoman Henson duly seconded by Councilman Thomas and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve the claims docket dated April 13, 2017 in the amount of $9,108,323.65 with amendments to the claims docket to remove a payment of $5,620,575.62 and add a payment of $122,000.00, bringing the claims docket total to $3,609,748.03. Voting yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston. Voting nay: Hammon.
Councilman Markham offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

**ORDER #16318** ORDER AUTHORIZING CHANGE OF LOCATION FOR THE REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL FROM CITY HALL 3RD FLOOR AUDITORIUM TO UNION STATION 2ND FLOOR - MEETING DATES: MAY 2, 2017, MAY 16, 2017 AND JUNE 6, 2017

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.

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

**ORDER #16319** RESOLUTION AND ORDER DESIGNATING AND AUTHORIZING OFFICE OF MAYOR AND/OR OFFICE OF PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR TO MAKE APPLICATIONS, EXECUTE LOAN AGREEMENTS AND ANY AMENDMENTS AND TO SIGN DOCUMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, TO UNDERTAKE AND COMPLETE THE PROJECT AT THE SOUTH WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT FUNDED BY WATER POLLUTION CONTROL REVOLVING LOAN FUND – LOAN NUMBER SRF-C280818-01 AND TO EXECUTE ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS

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.

President Houston advised of the notification of legal advertisement for the following:

a) One or more mini excavators  b) One or more tandem axle dump trucks
c) Police car computer mounts  d) Work uniforms – source of supply
e) Asphalt Mix – source of supply  f) Concrete Mix – source of supply
g) Concrete Pipe – source of supply  h) Sign Blanks & Materials – source of supply
i) Traffic Paint – source of supply  j) Rip Rap – source of supply
k) Crusher Run – source of supply

President Houston called on Mayor Bland for his report:

Mayor Bland said we are going through Phase I of this III Phase Project Paving Program. We are training our people on the equipment that we just got in within the last few months, and this relates to the safety of our citizens; the proper training on the use of the equipment so that some of the issues in your wards can be addressed. And as I have said before, there is only so much we can do with the 7.5 million we had for the paving and equipment. But we are trying to do as much as we can with the resources we have. And we ask the community to bear with us as we work with what we have available, because in the end, our streets will be a lot better than they were. Also, please slow down on the newly paved streets, people are going faster and speeding tickets are being issued. I would like to mention the baseball tournament we will have here next weekend. We will have over 100 teams in from out of town. I would like to thank Larry Gill, he is one of the persons helping to coordinate this tournament, and our Parks & Recreation Department is doing a great job of keeping up our fields to attract a tournament of this magnitude. I would like Jared Stanley to come up and receive a proclamation for all the work done by E-911. This is National Public Safety Month and we want to thank Mr. Stanley for all the work he and his staff do to partner with the city. We know we haven’t gotten everything the way we’d all like it right now, but we are working on the goal of getting it that way, Thank you Mr. Jared Stanley. Odell Hopson, Contract Compliance Officer, came to the podium to let the citizens know about Household Hazardous Waste Day, it will be May 6th from 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the Public Works Complex and Family Bowl Lanes. Finally the Mayor said he would like to thank the Council for the commitment to the contributions approved for the Mississippi Children’s Museum-Meridian and he thanked the people on the Board of the Children’s Museum-Meridian, for going over to Jackson to partner with the Children’s Museum there, to make one happen here.

President Houston called for citizens comments.

a) Allen Shute – spoke

President Houston called for Council comments:

Councilman Hammon said he constantly receives calls from people who wonder why the house next to them isn’t torn down yet. And anyone listening to TV or any news media will tell you that when we started the program there were about 3000 abandoned, vacant and dilapidated structures in the city. Now according to that numbers, within the last three years there has been 300 of those structures addressed. I ask how did we get 300, and the answer is that the number no longer includes the structures where people have torn them down.
themselves, or were taken to environmental court to make them accountable for their property. We have code enforcement officers now that are giving citations. So it is a program that is working to clear up some of these problems. This is a one out of ten turnaround. I was explaining this to someone the other day, that this had been let go for far too long, and they were horrified at the 3000 number, but I told them no, please keep in mind that we are working to correct it now, and we are much, much better than a lot of other cities.

Councilwoman Henson said, my family came from somewhere around New York, their name was Roshere and my great, great-grandmother married someone named Jones. And she was very good at delivering babies; all over there where I live now and where they lived, I would go with her when she went to deliver those babies. And I would sit on the front porch with their other children while she delivered the babies; it was a wonderful life for me. But you know I noticed something when I became a Councilwoman. My ward was so different, the houses were filled with families, mothers and fathers, the mothers mostly didn’t work the fathers worked, and the mothers and fathers dreamed that their sons or daughters would come back and live in that house. But the kids didn’t have any idea of living in those houses, they wanted to move somewhere else. And right now it’s just a strange, strange situation. We just have a lot of people and a lot of empty houses. I talked to Bunky Partridge, he is just so precious, and I asked him, if next year people come to board up their houses, if you can get them to paint the boards the color of the house? He said yes ma’am, and I’m looking forward to that. But the houses just make my heart hurt because nobody wants to live there. So we have just a different kind of ward. I could not have believed when I took office about 30 years ago that we could have a neighborhood that was that dead. Everywhere I go in my ward there is a lot of houses, but people don’t want to live there. It’s just a wonderful place to live, people are people, I don’t care what color you are, I love them, they love me, and I keep most of the kids that come around that way. But we’ve got a wonderful city and I looked around at those people that helped me get elected, they lived there and they were so nice to me, then all of a sudden I looked around and realized they weren’t there anymore. I found out most of them had died and the rest had moved to the county. So we need to try to make our wards look better, It’s a wonderful town and I can’t imagine anybody not wanting to live in Meridian, but I like Lauderdale County too.

Councilman Markham said he could listen to Ms. Henson talk all day. I want to thank everybody for coming and for watching to see how we conduct business for the City of Meridian. The Meridian Lauderdale County Branch of the NAACP will have a political forum on Thursday, April 27 @ 6:00 p.m. at the Frank Cochran Center. I received my invitation today, everybody is invited. The questions are formulated by the NAACP form committee and the general public will be able to submit questions to the committee for consideration. There is a number where candidates for Mayor and Council are supposed to call to confirm their attendance. There is also a message center at 641-715-3900 where you can possibly call to submit your questions and the email address is meridianlauderdalenaacp@gmail.com. So hopefully you can attend, if not I think a couple of candidates will live stream the event on face book. I want to congratulate the hard working lady, Kim Denison, and the other ladies of what will be the Mississippi Children’s Museum-Meridian. We’ve had the opportunity to listen as you presented your proposal and watched you debate several issues, going back and forth submitting information, sending emails
and the continuous updates to us. And you have gotten the City to obligate itself to help this become a reality, so we commend you for the hard work that you’ve done and for how consistently aggressive you are being in pursuing your goal of a Children’s Museum for Meridian. And you are all to be commended for that. Support the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day on May 6; Odell Hopson does a great job setting this up, it is a good thing for the community to clear out the waste around your homes that can’t be disposed of through the regular trash disposal route. I want to commend the Weschler Foundation on the Red Tail Squadron - Tuskegee Airmen Event that was presented at Key Field, Saturday, April 15th, it was very exciting, they had the actual bomber plane that was used during the war, and they had an African American pilot there showing the entrails of the plane. I had an opportunity to speak to the pilot and to Mr. Edward Lynch, Chairman of the Weschler Foundation, to talk about funding for a youth development aspect that can bring in things like this from year to year, prompting kids to discover different interests and goals in life, and see where it will take them. A lot of the community supported the event regardless of color, which was great.

Councilman Thomas said it’s good to have a council meeting where we spend our time on progress instead of problems. We’ve talked about paving, pumps, new business, and new infrastructure, those are positive, progressive and great things being done. People say we’re fussing, but we just want it done faster, like the Mayor said, when we have smooth new streets we want to go a little faster. School is about to be out for the summer and we have a lot of good things happening in the schools. I think you will be amazed when you see the amount of scholarships offered to these youngsters when they finish high school this year, and also the same with the kids that are finishing with MCC. Again, this is one of the few places in the nation with a town of this size where you can go through graduate school and never have to leave home. No out of state tuition, there’s a lot of great thing here. Meridian High School’s Girl Power Lifting Team is state champions again! It takes a lot of dedication, I don’t know how many of you ladies out there can lift 525 pounds, which is what one of the winners did. That’s a pretty good lift for a high school girl. The academic team won another tournament they participated in a couple of weeks ago. MCC ranked number three in the nation among community colleges. We take these things too much for granted. Mississippi State is finishing up the building at the corner downtown, making things a whole lot better. We keep hearing about store closures, it’s not because they are losing money in Meridian, because generally the stores in Meridian are making money. These closing stores are nationwide stores and these faults are part of the national structure causing them to close. The mall developer is very optimistic about things in Meridian; he wouldn’t have bought the property if he didn’t feel it was a good investment. He has plans for a lot of very positive developments out there. I want to congratulate Kelly Bator, she is a student at Meridian High School, she participates on four athletic teams, she’s a kicker for the football team; this is the first time Meridian has had a female kicker. She was selected for the Lindy Callahan Award, that award goes to the top 8 or 10 athletes that have good grades and all around development. That’s a tremendous honor to be selected as one of the 8 or 10 outstanding students in the State of Mississippi. So there are a lot of good things going on.
President Houston said again, we thank everyone for coming out. Please keep the announcements in mind. The third graders are testing right now. We ask those of you who know how to get prayers through, please pray for the Meridian School District third graders and for those trying to graduate with all of the exit exams they have to go through and all the things that are happening within our district. We also want to encourage you to shop local, even though it’s not Christmas, shop local. We want to send a strong message that we want to keep our stores and businesses here. And if you have a business idea, call the mall. I’m sure they will be happy to entertain the idea of you wanting to rent space; they will probably work with you. If you are in need of a good meeting place, a good place to relocate, consider the mall. Also as it relates to the paving program, we ask the citizens to be patient its coming. One thing we must appreciate about the administration is that this is not a project; it is an ongoing program, so we as continually looking at our streets to try to improve them by paving, patching, whatever makes them better. It is a program not simply a project. So even though these monies will become exhausted, we are equipping ourselves so Meridian will get herself back in place as the Queen City. And with your help we can do that. Be positive, be mindful, and let’s make Meridian great! Thank you for coming.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, the meeting was adjourned. Sine die.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Ann Clark, Clerk of Council