REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, JANUARY 03, 2017 AT 9:00 A.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 David Chandler, of First Assembly of Meridian and followed by the pledge to the flag.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman Henson and unanimously passed by the Council to confirm the agenda.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to approve the minutes dated December 20, 2016.

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

ORDER #16265 IN THE MATTER OF: THE CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT BY THE MAYOR OF JAMES F. COPELAND AS REPRESENTATIVE OF NAVAL AIR STATION MERIDIAN TO BE AN EX OFFICIO NON-VOTING MEMBER OF THE MERIDIAN PLANNING COMMISSION

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 Order:

Order #16266 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF SERVICES CONTRACT BETWEEN PLAN-IT GEO, LLC AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (URBAN FOREST RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIC PLAN)

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.
Nay: Hammon.

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

ORDER #16267 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE MAINTENANCE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT AGREEMENT BETWEEN UNITREND, INC. AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN

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 Thomas offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #16268 IN THE MATTER OF: ACCEPTING THE BID OF J & J CONTRACTORS, INC., COLLINSVILLE, MS FOR DENTZEL CAROUSEL BUILDING REPAIRS IN THE AMOUNT OF $63,000.00 AND AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF CONTRACT

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.

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

ORDER #16269 ORDER DESIGNATING MUNICIPAL DEPOSITORIES

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.
President Houston called on Mayor Bland for his report. Mayor Bland said he wanted to let everyone know about the Martin Luther King, Jr. breakfast being held at the Frank Cochran Center on January 16, 2017, with the parade to follow at noon.

President Houston called for citizens comments. The citizens listed below spoke.

a) Allen Shute

President Houston called for Council comments:

Councilman Hammon said he can assure you that this is a conservative Council, for the last four years this Council has been very conservative, last year we trimmed the budget by one and a half million dollars and we have not taken the bids we receive lightly. Most of the time the debating comes in because of the bids, there are five different people up here with different perspectives. We don’t all think alike, but this has been a very conscientious Council. And I will say again, a lot to the ideas that were initiated and put forward was done by the Council.

Councilwoman Henson said her holidays were exciting and she enjoyed hers very much, and by the looks on everyone’s faces here today, you all enjoyed yours too. She said it was a special time for the Henson family, her twin sons Ralph and Rick are both pastors and they were both able to come and celebrate their 63rd birthday. Their sister Beverly sat between them at the dinner table. She has spent her entire life sitting between them in the car and in church when they were children, because they never shut up. So we had a real good time and it brought back a lot of good memories. We enjoyed being together so very much, it was a good day.

Councilman Markham said he thanks all that come out, watch, or participate in the Council meetings. Councilman Markham said he will agree with Mr. Shute on the question of why a contract was awarded without additional input by other vendors. In the Meridian Star there was less than a paragraph to question the reasons why there were dissenting votes of the Council, making the outcome a three to two passage of the contract. Councilman Markham said we have got to do better. There is a lot of gun violence going on. Experts say that 40% of the guns sold in the United States were sold without the Brady background check being done on the buyer. I challenge the media to check into gun violence in our area. Not just what the numbers are, but how our citizens feel about it and what our leaders plan to do about the problem. Everybody have a great 2017 and happy New Year.

Councilman Thomas said that 2016 was a good year and he expects even better things from the year 2017. The city has a lot of things planned; extensive work will be done on the carousel house, and a lot of different activity programs will also be happening in the Parks and Recreation Department. Public Works is talking about the extensive paving program that will be going on, and the Police Department is hiring 15 to 20 new officers there. Dr. Carter has a lot of new plans for the Meridian Public Schools in the hope that people will move back to Meridian so their kids can attend there. The State Legislature is in session, they’re looking at infrastructure, we’re looking at infrastructure, they’re looking at education, we’re looking at education, they’re
looking at facilities and programs for the citizens, and we're doing the same thing. So, there are a lot of good things going on. We are coming to the end of elected terms for the City Council and the Mayor, which will end in about six months. So, you will see a lot of people announcing for office in the next few weeks. In particular, I want to mention Dr. Carter, she has been getting out into the public, working with the teachers and attending the different events the youngsters are involved in, there are a lot of good things going on. It can be a great year, we can make it a great year, but it’s up to all of us, not just the Council, the Mayor, the Department Heads, it’s going to take all of us.

President Houston said Happy New Year everybody, we thank you all for coming out this morning. I really wished we lived in a perfect world where there was no crime, no problems, where everything was peachy and it flowed with milk and honey. But, I believe Heaven is the only place where that actually happens, and we will never see that until we get there. Let’s work together, show up at our schools, impact the lives of our young people so they can make better decisions to improve their lives. If you have guns in your homes, make sure you lock them up and talk to you kids about gun safety. These are things we have to do individually and collectively. We are a village, let’s work together in 2017, no big I’s, no little u, no pointing the finger. We are all in this race together, we are one Meridian, and if we are pulling against one another we will fall. If our Police Department fails, our City Council fails, our Mayor, our Parks, Public Works, if any of us fall through, we all fall through. Let’s all pull together to be of one accord this year. Let’s push through and finish strong. Meridian is moving forward and moving up. No, of course we don’t think everything is pitch perfect; I don’t know of any place where it is perfect. But what we can do is pull together to move forward. I want to thank everyone for coming out, God bless you and have a Happy New Year!

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