REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, MAY 16, 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 Gary Houston, New Hope Blackwater 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 amendment to remove R-2 and R-3.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to approve the minutes dated May 02, 2017.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Markham and unanimously passed by the Council to approve the following Proclamations to be issued by the Mayor:

   May 21 - 27, 2017 – “National Public Works Week”
   May 22 – June 04, 2017 “Click It or Ticket”

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

ORDER #16326   ORDER DECLARING THREE TASERS SURPLUS AND NO LONGER NEEDED BY THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND AUTHORIZING THE DONATION OF SAID ITEMS TO STONEWALL, MISSISSIPPI POLICE DEPARTMENT

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

ORDER #16327 ORDER DECLARING EQUIPMENT SURPLUS AND NO LONGER NEEDED BY THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND AUTHORIZING SAID SURPLUS EQUIPMENT TO BE DISCARDED

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

ORDER #16328 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF VENUE USE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND THE MERIDIAN ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (SUNFISH TRIATHLON)

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

RESO. #6118 RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE INTENTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN TO CALL A PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSIDERING CERTAIN AMENDMENTS TO ORDINANCE NO. 3966 ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL ON JANUARY 11, 1994, SO AS TO RECLASSIFY CERTAIN LANDS IN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FROM DISTRICT R-1 TO DISTRICT B-2 (JUNE 20, 2017 @ 5:15 P.M.)

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

ORDER #16329 IN THE MATTER OF: THE CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT BY THE MAYOR OF JOHN H. HOLLIDAY TO THE MERIDIAN PLANNING COMMISSION

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 Resolution:

RESO. #6119 RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL (THE “GOVERNING BODY”) OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI (THE “CITY”), SUPPORTING MERIDIAN DOWNTOWN HOTELS, LLC, AND/OR ITS SUBSIDIARIES AND ASSIGNS (THE “DEVELOPER”), A HOTEL DEVELOPMENT TOURISM PROJECT (THE “TOURISM PROJECT”), AND ACKNOWLEDGING THAT SALES TAX COLLECTED FROM THE PROJECT WILL BE DIVERTED TO THE SALES TAX REBATE FUND (THE “REBATE FUND”) FOR A PERIOD OF UP TO FIFTEEN (15) YEARS, OR WHEN THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF THIRTY PERCENT (30%) OF THE APPROVED TOURISM PROJECT COSTS BY THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY INCURRED BY DEVELOPER FOR THE PROJECT HAS BEEN PAID OR WHICHEVER SHALL OCCUR FIRST, PURSUANT TO SECTION 57-26-1 ET SEQ. MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, AS AMENDED; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

RESO. #6120  RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI, APPROVING, CONSENTING TO, AND GRANTING A CERTAIN AD VALOREM PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION AS AN INDUCEMENT FOR THE LOCATION BY MERIDIAN DOWNTOWN HOTELS, LLC, OF ITS NEW HOTEL FACILITY IN SUCH CITY.

And, Councilman Thomas 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.

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

ORDER #16330  ORDER AUTHORIZING CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF EAST MISSISSIPPI FOR THE SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM (NOT TO EXCEED $172,000.00)

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

ORDER #16331  ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND SUBMISSION OF FEMA FIRE PREVENTION & SAFETY GRANT APPLICATION TO THE FIRE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

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 #16332 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT BETWEEN METALS TREATMENT TECHNOLOGIES, LLC (MT2) AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (FIRING RANGE LEAD RECLAMATION)

And, Councilwoman Henson 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.

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

ORDER #16333 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT CONTRACT WITH MUSIC GARDEN-MUSICAL FANTASY (JULY 4th CELEBRATION AT BONITA LAKES)

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 #16334 ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND THE MERIDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICE DEPARTMENT

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 Ordinance:
ORDI. #4484  ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY’S ZONING ORDINANCE NO. 3966 SO AS TO RECLASSIFY CERTAIN LANDS IN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FROM R-2 TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT TO B-2 NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT INCLUDING AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (RZ-17-04)

And, Councilman Markham 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.

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

ORDI. #4485  ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY’S ZONING ORDINANCE NO. 3966 SO AS TO RECLASSIFY CERTAIN LANDS IN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FROM R-1 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT TO R-2 TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT INCLUDING AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (RZ-17-05)

And, Councilwoman Henson 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.

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

RESO. #6121  RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI GRANTING EXEMPTION FROM AD VALOREM TAXES FOR A TEN-YEAR PERIOD TO VAN ZYVERDEN, INC. AS AUTHORIZED BY SECTION 27-31-105 ET SEQ., OF THE MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, AS AMENDED

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, 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 May 11, 2017 in the amount to $4,666,055.56. Voting yea: Thomas, Markham, Henson, Houston. Voting nay: Hammon.

President Houston called on Mayor Bland for his report:

Mayor Bland said before coming to the meeting he spoke with John Tampa concerning the Threefoot Building, he wanted to thank the Council for all they are doing to get the project going. Mayor Bland said the hotel group is going to increase the number of rooms from 108 to 135 rooms. Hopefully after all the paperwork is done they will be starting work in the near future. He thanked the Council on the unanimous vote to support the Boys & Girls Club on the jobs program they are implementing, with the help of a grant received from the Department of Human Services. Mayor Bland said the Club has been a priority, and it is a much needed organization in our community. Next, Mayor Bland introduced his Mayor’s Leadership Council, which is comprised of talented high school students from the different schools in the area. Leadership Council President, Joshua Williams from Meridian High School and Vice-Mayor Madison Gordon from Lamar School wanted to present a mural the students have created. Joshua said they wanted the mural to show Meridian as the very beautiful place it is, so they decided to use a symbol that everyone in Meridian knows; The Threefoot Building. The mural depicts the Threefoot Building surrounded by hands of different colors. The Mayor said he wants to thank Terrell Thompson of the Community Development Department, the Police Department, the Fire Department and the Meridian Public School District concerning the vandalism that took place at Meridian High School. Everybody put in a lot of work Friday evening and over the weekend to swiftly get to the bottom of that unfortunate situation. So I want to thank them again for a job well done. The Mayor presented a proclamation to the Public Works Director, Hugh Smith for “Public Works Week” and a “Click It or Ticket” proclamation to Lt. Rita Jack of the Meridian Police Department. Lt. Jack said she wants to thank the City Council for their approval and support of the seat belt campaign to save lives. Bo Hawkins spoke on behalf of Relay for Life, he said thank you Meridian City Council, Laura Carmichael, Terrell Thompson, Bunky Partridge, Kelvin McGruder, Buck Roberts, Dr. George Thomas and the entire staff of the City of Meridian for so many reasons, and the way everyone helped was tremendous, this event is a success because of you. The Relay for Life here in Meridian is #1 in the State of Mississippi. Thank you for all the tireless help and support.

President Houston called for citizens comments.
a) Allen Shute – spoke on city issues
b) Lou Newman – spoke on the North Hills rezoning appeal

President Houston called for Council comments:
Councilman Hammon said: The young people that spoke have a good point, but I don’t know if they realize how deep that goes. I’ve said this for almost four years, if we don’t clean up the city no business will come into the city. At the EMBDC there is a list of things that businesses are looking for in cities before they consider locating a business there. These potential businesses will drive around the city to see what shape your city is in, and if it doesn’t look as if they would want their people to live there, they don’t locate in that city. The NAACP forum said the same thing and a lot of people don’t put the two things together, but they are absolutely joined at the hip. If we don’t clean up our infrastructure we will not get businesses in here.

Councilman Markham said: Thank you all for coming; it has been a very positive meeting to some extent, and a very thorough meeting. I’m glad to see the interest of the community residents here in regards to that parcel on North Hills and Hwy 39. And with the 40 residents appearing here tonight, it shows when you engage people and they have an interest they definitely have something to say. I want to make one clarification in relation to the Boys & Girls Club. There has never been a question of what the Boys & Girls Club do for our city and what they do for our kids, nor how hard they work. The only question on previous presentations is how they are brought to us. It was very refreshing to see Mr. Hood approach us with a grant behind him and a proven record of 30 years of working in this community and with a competent staff that knows what they are doing, with a work program and an actual plan in place. What you see of the Council for the last four years is that the Council has no problem working with anyone, assisting anyone with a well thought out plan and a proven track record of effort and success. And good faith knowledge and actually trying to do what is right for the entirety of the citizens of Meridian. Lastly, addressing the vandalism that occurred over the weekend at Meridian High School, I think the rainbow in the storm is the fact that a former valedictorian created a go fund me account, which raised almost $2,500.00 in one day from about 51 donors. To take this money and give it to the Meridian High School Art Department where the art department teacher will use the money to oversee a mural being created over the graffiti wall. I think this is excellent; the presentation of the donation will be this Thursday at 4:00 p.m. If possible, please make plans to attend. I was struck by the number of people that showed support and pride for the blue and white high school colors. It shows that this community can come together in times of difficulty. While Lt. Jack is here I want to commend her on the prescription drug receive back program. The program brought in 150 pounds of unused prescription drugs from the consumers. I think this should be commended. Again, thank you all for attending.

Councilman Thomas said: In about thirty minutes we will know who will be on the ballot for the general election in a couple of weeks; we have the runoff going on right now. I encourage folks to get out and vote its critical we have a big turnout to vote, because if you don’t have that, a lot of things can happen. The first time I won an election I won by one vote. Everybody needs to go vote, that one person that does go or doesn’t go can make a big difference. If you can’t be there, there are ways to vote ahead of time if you have a legitimate reason. I will echo what Mr. Markham said about the vandalism; sometimes out of bad things great things happen, I’ve seen more support for Meridian Public Schools (Meridian High School) in the last few days
than I have seen in a long time. We have a lot of good youngsters out there that have worked
very diligently to achieve a lot of good things. It takes one or two and the reputation of the
school changes drastically. The administration (Dr. Carter) responded as she should, almost
immediately. The alumni, students, the teachers, we have a good high school, we have a good
opportunity at Meridian High School, we want to make it a good opportunity. If we abandon our
schools you have yourself to blame if it doesn’t end up like you want it to be. There are a lot of
options by supporting those schools; it may be we have children there, grandchildren there, it
may be by coming to those events supporting those activities or donating money to clubs or
booster groups, helping with honor student courts, band programs, drama programs, and things
like that, you need to attend. It’s a shame when you go to an event and there are more students
on stage than there are people in the audience. These students work extremely hard. This year
we had art students that won national awards, not just local or state awards, they won
national awards. The scholarships offered to students out there were around 12 to 15 million
dollars, of course they can’t take all of them because they were from various schools, but
when we talk about opportunity, the opportunity is there. I think the agreement with the
police department and the public schools will help, people are concerned about security. I have
two granddaughters that graduated this year; they had their pick of where they wanted to go
to college, because of the education they got at Meridian Public Schools. They have gone there
for thirteen years, no, they didn’t fail they just started early. There are a lot of good
opportunities out there, not just in the public schools but in our total community. You heard
the Mayor’s Youth Leadership Group talk about what they are doing, so you are never too young
or never too old to get out and help. Just sitting in your house gripping and complaining about
how bad things are you’re not going to get much done. I plan on living a few more years, some of
these people have got a long time, this could be a good place folks, it’s up to us to make it a good
place we can’t blame other people. We have five people on the council, most of the time we
agree, but sometimes we disagree, that’s why we are elected, to make decisions and that’s just
part of it. So get out and do something to make it a better community, take part, and do
something. A bad thing happened at Meridian High School and they have had days of support
because of it, sometimes bad things have to happen to bring out the support of good people.

Council President Houston said: Again, we thank everyone for coming out tonight. Meridian is a
great place to live, shop and raise a family. Make sure you go out June 06 and vote. It’s very
important, mark your calendar, set an alarm, whatever you need to do, go out and vote on June
06, 2017. That’s the first Tuesday in June. Our annual James Chaney Memorial Day at the park
will be held Saturday, May 27th at James Chaney Park. We have a lot of vendors, fish fry,
chicken wings, good tea; we have a lot of stuff, a deejay, the fire department is coming out to
hose everybody down (water up in the air). We celebrate the life of Mr. James Chaney, he
changed the life for a lot of us in this community, so we want to honor him and celebrate him. It
will be a great day for the children with lots of games and activities; we invite you to come out
from Noon to 3:00 at the James Chaney Park. One thing I think we can all take away from this
meeting is that persistency pays. God bless you and thank you for coming out tonight.

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