REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 03, 2017 AT 9:00 A.M.

Meeting called to order by Council President Thomas.

Present: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.

Absent: None.

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

A motion was made by Councilman T. Johnson duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the council to confirm the agenda with an amendment to the agenda by adding R-8 (FY'17 budget amendment). Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and unanimously passed by the Council to approve the minutes dated September 19, 2017.

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

ORDER #16429 ORDER DECLARING VEHICLE SURPLUS AND NO LONGER NEEDED BY THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND AUTHORIZING SAID VEHICLE TO BE USED FOR PARTS 2011 FORD CROWN VICTORIA-VIN #2FABP7BV5BX1211140

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

Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

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

ORDER #16430 ORDER APPLYING FOR A PHIL HARDIN FOUNDATION FY’17 GRANT FOR JEANNIE’S PLACE AT PLANET PLAYGROUND
And, Councilman Lindemann seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

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

ORDER #16431 ORDER RECORDING INTO THE MINUTES OF THE MERIDIAN CITY COUNCIL THE “CERTIFICATION TO MUNICIPAL COMPLIANCE QUESTIONNAIRE”

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

Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

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

RESO. #6147 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF 2017 CONTRACT FOR THE USE OF THE LAUDERDALE COUNTY JAIL

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

Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

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

ORDER #16432 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND SUBMISSION OF FY 2018 GRANT APPLICATION TO THE MISSISSIPPI OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY (402 POLICE TRAFFIC SERVICES)

And, Councilwoman Houston seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:
Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

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

ORDER #16433 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND SUBMISSION OF BJA FY 2017 EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT (JAG) PROGRAM – LOCAL SOLICITATION APPLICATION TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

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

Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

Councilwoman F. Johnson offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #16434 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI AND COUNTY OF LAUDERDALE, MISSISSIPPI; (2017 BYRNE JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT (JAG) PROGRAM AWARD)

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

Yea: T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: Thomas.

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

ORDER #16435 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT NO. 1 BETWEEN NEEL SCHAFFER, INC., AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (5TH STREET & 25TH AVENUE STREETSCAPE PROGRAM)
And, Councilwoman F. Johnson seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

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

ORDER #16436 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF CONTRACT BETWEEN MCNEIL RHOADS, LLC AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN CONTINGENT ON FINANCING (ENERGY SERVICES)

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

Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the claims docket dated September 28, 2017 in the amount to $3,706,313.55.

Councilman T. Johnson offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Resolution:

RESO. #6148 RESOLUTION APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE AMENDED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2017, AND DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK IN REFERENCE THERETO

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

Yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

President Thomas called on Mayor Bland for his report:

Mayor Bland said the Parks & Recreation Department will present the USM Eagles Wheelchair
Basketball Team vs The City of Meridian Community All Stars game, Saturday, October 21, 2017, 5:00 p.m. at Carver Middle School. So far our team consists of Councilwoman Kim Houston, Councilwoman Fannie Johnson and Councilman Tyrone Johnson and I. We are going to try to compete against these guys and we are asking for two more volunteers so Weston and Dr. Thomas if you want to play let me know and we can have a full team. We are asking everyone in the community to come out. Also in Parks & Recreation we have a Football Punt, Pass and Kick event for the young people Sunday, October 29, 2017 at Q.V. Sykes Field from 3:00-4:00 for boys and girls from ages 6-15. Of course each year the winners get to go on and compete at the Superdome in the Regional Punt, Pass and Kick. So, any youngster in this age group may compete, registration begins at 3:00 and competition begins at 4:00. There is no fee, but you must bring your birth certificate. Tomorrow, Wednesday, October 4, 2017 from 12:00 to 1:30, Pastor Gary Houston, will have a Ministerial Workforce Alliance Luncheon at Mt. Olive Baptist Church to announce the Free Entrepreneurship Training Seminars. These seminars will be held back to back in October on two Saturdays, the 14th and the 21st from 8:00 – 2:00. It’s a great opportunity to learn how to become a small business owner. There is a private consultant that has done a lot of consulting for Mississippi Power that will be there; we have had a lot of people that have come to these work force alliance functions in the past looking for job opportunities. So, if you know anyone or if you yourself are trying to become self-employed or to become an entrepreneur, there is a lot of information offered that could be instrumental in helping a lot of people in our city. We have been talking about ways to use some of our budget funds and funds that we have received to initiate some playground projects, other than the Planet Playground where we’re campaigning and trying to raise funds to build. I’ll ask Mr. McGruder and Mrs. Carmichael to come up; most of you guys were there when we received the $25,000.00 grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield. We want to devise a plan to use some of those grant funds and some of the other funds we have in the budget to initiate a project for a playground in Ward 4. Laura Carmichael said that Thursday, October 12th at 5:30 p.m. on the city hall lawn, Blue Cross Blue Shield will be in Meridian to officially present the check to the City of Meridian and designate us as a Healthy Hometown for a population over 15,000 and there will be a big celebration. The $25,000.00 will be designated to the park initiative in Ward 4. Mr. McGruder said in the next work session he and the administration will bring to the council a proposal to apply for a grant to go with the funds from Blue Cross Blue Shield to build this playground. Mr. McGruder said he talked with Councilman Johnson of Ward 4 and showed him the plans and Councilman Johnson was excited about the project. Mayor Bland said he will continue to bring forth ideas and plans to improve the city.

President Thomas called for citizens comments.

a) Allen Shute – did not appear
b) Diane King – called to cancel, another appointment

President Thomas called for Council comments:

Councilman Lindemann said thank you all for being here today, since we last met there are a couple of things I have been working on. I’ve been meeting with different organizations in
Meridian, service organizations and non-profits to kind of spotlight some of the activities going on. Some activity going on with Facebook: a lot of people don’t even realize some of the activities and opportunities that give back which exist in our community. So I’ve taken the time to spotlight the Community Foundation, where you can set up your own funds to go toward any number of things. Right now they have a lot of great scholarships and different funds, one fund in particular go to students in the Meridian Housing Authority that graduate from Meridian High. There have already been four students that received full scholarships that have gone through this fund, which is a big opportunity for a lot of these kids. So if you are interested in contributing or participating in any of these funds, get in touch with the Community Foundation. I met with the Superintendent of the Meridian Public Schools, Dr. Carter, and we had a pretty good conversation about starting a young entrepreneur’s club with the 9th grade academy. Apparently they have a class there where students are encouraged to pursue different careers and sort of figure out what they might want to do. So, I figured this would be a good opportunity to lead the way in motivating tomorrow’s business leaders in Meridian. This is a way to show the kids that if they have that entrepreneurial and aspirational spirit with the motivational drive they can make their dreams happen. That is something I’m going to be working with, with different leaders in the business community. I’ll try to get mentors and leaders to get with some of the kids to provide them with guidance. I’m pretty excited about the program and looking forward to getting it going soon.

Councilwoman Houston said good morning we are glad you could be with us this first meeting in October; this is breast cancer awareness month, if you know a survivor or lost someone just remember to keep everybody lifted. We do encourage you to volunteer in our schools; they desperately need to see us in the schools or after school and in the neighborhoods, doing whatever we can do. To encourage our youth to be all that they can be is a wonderful thing. Be safe and thank you all for coming.

Councilwoman Johnson said I want to thank Councilwoman Houston for including me in a uniform drive for our middle school children. We all know about ‘Stuff the Bus’ and some of the other projects we did, but I didn’t realize that was mainly for the elementary schools. Some of our middle school students still need uniforms. If anybody would like to donate some slightly used or new uniforms for the middle schoolers please contact either one of us. I want to send a special thanks to Parks & Recreation; a few months ago I had a young man in a wheelchair that really didn’t have much to do, so he started coming out to L.O.V.E.’s Kitchen volunteering. A couple of weeks ago I was able to go to him and let him know, I had something for him if he wanted to do it. I found out from him that he had actually played with the Jackson State Wheelchair Basketball Team and he said he will be doing some three pointers. He is going to be playing on the team against us, but asking him to be a part of that upcoming game was one of the best things I have ever been able to do for a volunteer. So, special thanks for that project, and thank you all for coming.

Councilman Johnson said good morning, I want to thank the Parks & Recreation Director for really pushing for something for the kids in Ward 2. A playground is something that we have never had over there and it has been needed for years, I really appreciate all the efforts put forth to correct that. October 7, 2017, we will kick off once more for the graveyard clean-up
on 10th Avenue & 24th Street. After all the work we have put into it, it looks a whole lot better than the way it looked before! People notice it; it was a real eyesore for the community. Magnolia and Parkview Schools are looking for any donations and ideas that will help beautify the schools to make it a more welcoming environment. This is a project to get the kids involved and excited, and we also welcome your help and involvement. If you or anyone you know would like to donate, please contact me or the schools’ principal. Magnolia School is doing exceptionally well when it comes to the kids’ grades; the school has made a big turnaround for the better. Parkview is also doing well; Mr. Boone has a few projects in mind for the kids. One idea is the weekend snack backpack; this backpack will be taken home with foodstuffs for the kids over the weekend for those that may not have food that Friday evening. And piggybacking off of the uniforms donations, Magnolia and Parkview would both like to do this as well. I live off of 24th Street and there is no sidewalk from 18th Avenue to 23rd Avenue for the kids walking to and from school and I think we should look into some type of walkway. There is a hill there that could be dangerous for walkers. There was an incident of violence a week or so ago that happened in Ward 2 across from my house. There is a grocery store open in my ward that sells expired food, I’m looking for someone to come in and do some real investigation of what’s going on there; they have slot machines in the back of the store and it’s a real problem in our community and this is also promoting violence in the community. I would like to get with Chief Dubose to see what we can do to address this problem. I think we should hit it aggressively because there are lives in danger. Just this past weekend there were two guys arguing in my yard; one with a twelve gage shotgun pointed at the other guy, right outside my kids’ window. I know we need to address some of these issues aggressively. We can’t just put them on the back, people are getting killed. Things are happening over there in Ward 2, we want to make it a welcoming environment, that’s one of the reasons I ran for City Council, to change things for the better and I know some people want things to change. People are welcoming and inviting change in Ward 2, but we need some help to make those changes. Chief Dubose, I definitely want to get with you. I would also like to get with the Mayor and Department Heads about organizing a community meeting, people have been asking about it and I want to get with everyone to arrange a good date that is best for you guys so you can all be there. I know they want to speak with the Mayor, Chief Dubose and Mr. McGruder. Thank you all.

President Thomas said I appreciate people along with the council members bringing things forward and the city staff bringing things to us that we can consider. We live in a rough time; you look at the news and the newspapers and in a time when holy days are going on to have the amount of violence, the turmoil, the criticism and the complaints. And it’s hard when things are tough to remain upbeat and positive and expect better things to occur. But it seems like our nation is so divided that we look more for problems than opportunities to improve the things that we have. Like adding a playground, helping children in school, it seems like we are more concentrated on the negative rather than the positive. While at the same time in the nation, the state of Texas, the state of Florida, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands the amount of money that is going to have to be spent there, not just the money but the human involvement it’s going to take, it’s going to be a rough time for a while. I hope we can get to the point where the nation can come together, not necessarily the nation, but even this state come together, maybe just the city come together in positive ways to face some of these issues that we have. If we don’t face the issues we sure can’t deal with them. We can’t hide the issues we’ve got to deal with
them. We have religious groups that are going out of their way to help with things, whether it’s providing flood buckets or donating money, or equipment and supplies. All of us have to get involved, we can’t sit back and wait, there are a lot of opportunities out there and things we can do. But we’ve got to face those issues whether it’s violence or anything else. We can’t hide our face or stick our head in the sand, we have to face these things whether it’s internal problems with the city, problems with the state or problems with the nation. A lot of people including myself believe in prayer. This meeting may not be the place to bring it up, but it’s going to be brought up. The spirituality of this nation is something I think all of us have to be concerned about. I think there is good in this nation but a lot of times we don’t hear about it, I think we hear mostly about the negative, and I think a lot of people are doing the best they can. Pastor and Author, Charles Swindoll’s book about Attitude reads – I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent of how we react to it! We are in charge of our attitude. This meeting is now adjourned.

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