REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, APRIL 03, 2018 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 Dr. Jeff Myers of Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church and followed by the pledge to the flag.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to confirm the agenda with the following amendments: Add R-7a (Order authorizing application for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) on behalf of Wechsler Foundation); and adding an Executive Session concerning the sale, purchase, lease, and eminent domain of property.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to add to the agenda this additional amendment: R-8a (Order setting public hearing concerning Wechsler Foundation grant).

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and passed by a majority vote of Council to add R-9 (Order to override the Mayor’s veto of cell tower Order No. 16528). Voting yea: T. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: Thomas. Recuse: F. Johnson.

Motion was made by Councilman T. Johnson duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the minutes dated March 20, 2018. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

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

ORDER #16529 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF USE OF OFFICE SPACE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FOR THEIR PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

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

ORDER #16530 ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT AWARD IN THE AMOUNT OF $12,000.00 FROM THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MDA) FOR DOWNTOWN BANNER PROGRAM

And, Councilman T. 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 Houston offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #16531 ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN MUELLER SYSTEMS, LLC AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FOR WATER METERS, HARDWARE, SOFTWARE AND INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES (ENERGY SERVICES)

And, Councilman T. 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 #16532 ORDER ACCEPTING BID FOR HERBICIDE/SOWASHEE CREEK FROM PROGRESSIVE SOLUTIONS, NEWTON, MS IN THE AMOUNT OF $9,690.00

And, Councilman Lindemann seconded the motion, whereupon said Order was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:
Councilman Lindemann offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #16533 ORDER AUTHORIZING DESIGNATION OF CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATOR ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVE AND HISTORY, HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

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 #16534 ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF PROPOSAL TO HOLD CLASSES OFFERED BY MERIDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE (MCC) AT THE NEW VELMA YOUNG COMMUNITY CENTER

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 Resolution:

RESO. #6177 FINAL 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 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.

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

RESO. #6178 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATION TO THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) IN THE AMOUNT OF $500,000.00 ON BEHALF OF THE WECHSLER FOUNDATION

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.

Motion was made by Councilman T. Johnson duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the claims docket dated March 29, 2018 in the amount of $2,193,280.12. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

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

ORDER #16535 ORDER SETTING PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER APPLICATION TO THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY FOR A SMALL CITIES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) OF UP TO $600,000.00 FOR BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE WECHSLER FOUNDATION (MAY 01, 2018 @ 9:30 A.M.)
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.

Presentation Agenda: President Thomas called on: Linda Waters – ATMOS Energy, she talked about the ongoing work of gas pipe replacements that ATMOS Energy has contracted to do here in Meridian.

President Thomas called on: Wechsler Foundation – Jennifer Buford spoke on the needed information from the city to apply for a Wechsler Foundation building improvement grant.

President Thomas called on Mayor Bland for his report:
Mayor Bland said he wants to let the citizens of Meridian know that the company doing the gas lines replacement is Kelly Construction Company and the owner of this company from Alabama is currently looking for ways to bring more work here to Meridian. This company is giving back to the community by sponsoring schools and events and they are hiring people within our community. This is the type of partnership that is good for our city. I want to let ATMOS Energy know that Kelly Construction is doing a great job with their underground gas lines. There will be a ribbon cutting for the new playground at Velma Young Center; this is in Councilman Johnson’s Ward. The cutting will be Friday, April 13, 2018. Also, this Saturday, April 07, 2018, we will have Earth’s Bounty at Singing Brakeman’s Park. The weekend of Saturday, March 31, 2018 will be the Threefoot Arts Festival on the City Hall Lawn from 9-5. I hope everyone comes out to enjoy the festival. There will be a meeting with the Boys and Girls Club Director, Ricky Hood and his Board of Directors, to come to an agreement on the use of Velma Young. We have here today the members of The Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP). Ms. Sabrina Wilson, Coordinator of RSVP and Ms. Johnnie Hopson, RSVP Assistant. The work of RSVP in our community does immeasurable good. They give their time, energy and talent to work with and help people of all ages. They play an exceptional roll in mentoring and tutoring our school children. The RSVP so far this year has 175 volunteers, they have put in 14,700 hours in a 12 month period and the age range of these volunteers is 55 years and older. RSVP is a partner agency of United Way and we want to introduce our new United Way CEO, Mr. Derron Radcliff, we look forward to working with him. I would like to ask everyone that lives in the City of Meridian to be patient with us as we continue to try to groom our city. We have a lot of work being done downtown right now, and because of our budget we have to try to change the way we are doing things. We can’t just depend on our property and sales taxes we have to try to grow our tourism business, and with the Arts and Entertainment Experience getting set to open, we are concentrating on helping that be as smooth a transformation as possible. We are trying to do everything we can to attract more people to our community, so we can deal with our streets, roads, fire,
President Thomas asked the Council if there was any action to be taken by them on the Mayor’s veto of the cell tower approval from the prior council meeting. It was moved by Councilwoman Houston and duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson to add an Order to the agenda to override the Mayor’s veto of cell tower Order No. 16528). Voting yea: T. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: Thomas. Recuse: F. Johnson. Stephen Wilson, attorney representing the city concerning the cell tower appeal moved to the dais in the attorney position in this matter. Councilwoman F. Johnson having recused herself left the meeting. After discussion of the matter a vote was taken.

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

ORDER #16536 ORDER TO OVERRIDE MAYOR’S VETO OF ORDER No. 16528 DATED MARCH 20, 2018, ENTITLED “ORDER AUTHORIZING APPROVAL OF APPEAL BY SOUTHERN LINC TO PLACE A TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWER ON PROPERTY LOCATED AT 5021 HIGHWAY 493 NORTH, MERIDIAN MS”

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

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

Councilwoman F. Johnson returned to the meeting and Council President Thomas called for citizens comments.

a) Allen Shute – spoke
b) Saveda Williams – did not appear

President Thomas called for Council comments:

Councilman Lindemann said the entrepreneur’s class is coming along fine. They now have two new mentors from Citizen National Bank. Next month they will present their ideas like the “Shark Tank” program, with the possibility of earning some scholarships. I hope this will introduce some pretty good ideals from the kids. I have seen some very innovative ideas; it will be interesting to see how it will all play out. I hope to have a rough draft in the next week or so for our crowd funding website. The East Mississippi Realtors are having a Tiny House project. It is basically a grassroots effort to show how a home can be attainable for anyone, for more information about that, the number to
Councilwoman Houston said good morning everybody, we are glad to see you all. We appreciate the volunteers, we appreciate the Wechsler Foundation and the Administration and the Mayor for all you do. I want to thank Parks and Recreation for the team you brought out to work our Ward 4 Neighborhood Easter Egg Hunt that we had on Good Friday. And also, I thank the brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity for the great help and participation at James Chaney Park on that Saturday. A lot of good things are happening at James Chaney Park. We will be having our annual James Chaney Day at the park on that Memorial weekend. If you don’t have plans to go anywhere, come over to the park to celebrate Mr. James Chaney, he was a native of this city that did some wonderful things during the Civil Rights Movement. We have a program, the Fire Department will be there, it will be just an all-around good time for all. This is the final push for those of you that have students in the Meridian School District or any school, this is the final semester before summer break, and I want to encourage you, just like these people sitting in here today, we need more volunteers. Whether you to come into the schools during the week, start a Saturday mentoring program or volunteer to tutor. And businesses, if you would consider giving some type of prize as incentives to schools just to get our children motivated about learning and excited to excel. We need everybody to get involved, If Meridian Public Schools fails, this city fails. So we need churches, clubs, everybody, to take an active interest in our youth and their success.

Councilwoman F. Johnson said I want to thank the Parks and Recreation Department for the inclusion of the special needs children in a lot of the activities arranged for their participation during the Easter Egg Hunt. It did all of our hearts good to witness those children’s pleasure and excitement. RSVP and Foster Grandparents, thank you for all you do.

Councilman T. Johnson said good morning, I just want to give an update of the happenings in Ward 2. We are about to restart the cleanup maintenance of the cemetery. I’ve been trying to get in touch with the Mississippi Department of Archives to see if we can get the cemetery deemed a landmark. So it will be cared for and people can actually get in to visit relatives buried there. We will be asking for volunteers to help us in the next few weeks to continue this phenomenal effort before the grass get out of control. I want to thank the Mayor and his staff for all the awesome work you do. Thanks to all of you guys in this community for coming out to help build the Velma Young Playground. The kids are eager and ready to play on this playground. Thank you for everything that you’ve done to make that a success. April 13, 2018 will be the ribbon cutting to open the playground; the time will be announced later. I’ve been reaching out to restaurants and other businesses to have a job fair for the young people ages 16-21 to see if we can possibly work on getting the kids a job for the summer. So, when they come to the job fair everything is done, they already have their application filled out, they are dressed to be hired, and the businesses are ready, right then and there, to hire on the spot. That is a goal I’m working on right now and hopefully it will happen. Another thing, I’m
working with the Mississippi Job Corps and we hope to be very close to getting a branch here in Meridian. We are trying to get a building downtown, so the kids can sign up to go and learn a skill and be productive, to give back to the city and help our city grow. Thank you for everything you are doing and God Bless.

Council President Thomas made the following announcement to be reflected and spread upon the minutes: Previously in the appointment of the Meridian Public School Board Trustees there was wording in the Order of their term expiration date and a statement worded, “and/or until a successor has been appointed”. That language should not be used; the term of each appointment shall be worded and reflected below upon these minutes:

Mr. Michael Van Veckhoven’s appointment as a Meridian Public School District Trustee, term expires on the Friday before the first Saturday of March, 2019.
Rev. Gary Houston’s appointment as a Meridian Public School District Trustee, term expires on the Friday before the first Saturday of March, 2020.
Ms. Shelia Austin’s appointment as a Meridian Public School District Trustee, term expires on the Friday before the first Saturday of March, 2021.
Mr. Duane Maust’s appointment as a Meridian Public School District Trustee, term expires on the Friday before the first Saturday of March, 2022.
Dr. Evadna Lyons’ appointment as a Meridian Public School District Trustee, term expires on the Friday before the first Saturday of March, 2023.

An executive session was requested regarding the sale, purchase, lease, and eminent domain of certain lands. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann 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 F. Johnson and unanimously passed by the Council to declare an executive session in order to discuss the sale, purchase, lease, and eminent domain of certain lands. The Council then went into executive session. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and unanimously passed by the Council to go out of executive session. The meeting was called to order with no action taken.

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