REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2018 AT 5:00 P.M.

Meeting called to order by Council President, Tyrone Johnson.

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

Absent: None.

The meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor Bob Null, First Assembly of Meridian and followed by the pledge to the flag.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to confirm the agenda with the following amendments: Add: R-6 (Order authorizing in-kind donation of Union Station room for National Mental Health event). Add: R-7 (Order authorizing in-kind donation of Union Station room for Lauderdale County Event). Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson to lift from the table as R-8 (Order authorizing payment of claim from Modern Landscape Design). Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: Lindemann.

Motion made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the minutes dated October 02, 2018. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

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

RESO. #6201 RESOLUTION AMENDING RESOLUTION NO. 6191 ENTITLED “RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE FORM OF AND EXECUTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT (THE “DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT”), BY AND BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI (THE “CITY”) AND COLLETT PROPERTIES, INC., A NORTH CAROLINA CORPORATION OR ITS AFFILIATED ENTITY (THE “DEVELOPER”).”

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

ORDER #16637 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION TO THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION FOR A CULTURE OF HEALTH PRIZE

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, T. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.  
Nay: None.

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

ORDER #16638 ORDER AUTHORIZING TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT WITH BRINDLEE MOUNTAIN FIRE APPARATUS (TO SALE A 1993 E-ONE 95’ CUSTOM TRUCK PLATFORM APPARATUS FOR THE CITY OF MERIDIAN)

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

ORDER #16639 IN THE MATTER OF: ACCEPTING THE BID FOR NORTH WATER TREATMENT PLANT FILTER MEDIA REMOVAL/REPLACEMENT & BASIN REPAIR FROM HEMPHILL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, INC., FLORENCE, MS IN THE AMOUNT OF $432,050.60 AND AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF CONTRACT FOR SAID WORK

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 Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson to open discussion on the claims docket. The claims docket dated October 11, 2018 passed by majority vote of the Council in the amount of $2,199,665.38. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson. Voting nay: Lindemann. Motion was made after the executive session by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson to approve settlement claim payment to Modern Landscape Design, payment #806791 in the amount of $4,890.00, bringing the claims docket total to $2,204,555.38. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: Lindemann.

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

ORDER #16640 ORDER AUTHORIZING DONATION TO THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF MENTAL ILLNESS (NAMI) FOR PARADE PERMIT $25.00 AND RENTAL OF BONITA LAKES $50.00 FEES WAIVED AS DONATION IN-KIND FROM THE CITY

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

ORDER #16641 ORDER AUTHORIZING IN-KIND DONATION TO LAUDERDALE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY FOR USE OF UNION STATION CONFERENCE ROOMS ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2018

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.

President Johnson called for the Mayor’s Report:
Mayor Bland said he wanted to talk about an issue that is coming up with the water metering system and billing that we are currently upgrading and changing over. We ask that any citizen that has noticed a change in their billing to contact the water department at 601-484-7173 to find out if you have any billing adjustment issues. We ask you to bear with us as we progress; and to indicate to the Council if you receive any of these calls to direct them to the number given. We are continuing to move forward on Planet Playground. We are giving a rehab rebuild official date of November 17, 2018 and hopefully we will have more information to the Council and citizens, build out will take a few months, but we hope to have Planet Playground complete by February or March. This weekend, thanks to Coach Adams, we had a great event at Carver Middle School. We had the wheelchair basketball game, and thank you Councilwoman Houston for being there. We played the USM Rolling Eagles. We had students, adults, me and some of the local bankers. It was a very intense and physical game, but we played well and won, it was a lot of fun. The USM team said they will be back again next year. Mr. Tampa has continued to make progress on the Threefoot Building. Again, to the citizens and businesses around downtown, please continue to work with us as they work in the area, this will be great for downtown. The Downtown Candy Crawl will be Tuesday, October 23, 2018, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. along with fun activities on City Hall Lawn.

President Johnson called for citizen comments:

a) Allen Shute – did not appear
b) Tommy Williams - spoke

President Johnson called for Council comments:

Councilman Lindemann said I got a message yesterday from someone, I assume it was a friend, they sent me a link to a YouTube video of two professionals that were suited up with briefcases in hand that were headed up an escalator and the escalator broke. And instead of doing the obvious and taking the appropriate steps forward to reach the top of the escalator by utilizing it as stairs, they instead waited, and called for help, waiting on someone to come in and fix it. I feel that this is extremely applicable to our current situation, because while we are dealing with this pay band issue, we are in a similar situation where we can either wait on the broken escalator and call for help and hope the administration will clean this up and treat all employee fairly and have an equitable evaluation system that works for everyone in a way that is appropriate, fair, reasonable, and based on merit and not any sort of favoritism. Or, we could take the appropriate action ourselves, if at the end of the next couple of months when we reach that January 1, 2019 deadline, if no reasonable action has been taken by the administration. I just found that it was a very applicable metaphor of what we are facing right now as a city, as a whole. We can either, as a Council wait on the escalator to be fixed or we could take a few steps forward and reach our goal anyway. From my perspective, we should not consider any sort of pay band adjustment until we are presented with a legitimate evaluation plan that includes employees having the ability to evaluate their supervisor’s evaluation of
Councilwoman Houston said that she agrees we do need to have an evaluation process to be fair to all individuals, and some of the things we have heard since all of this has been going on, the morale is getting tough. There is an evaluation in the Stennis Study and the HR person has mentioned some evaluations in place. Whether or not those things are happening is definitely something we need to address in the upcoming work session. I want to encourage the community; I encourage those watching via media and those here to please help, our school district really needs our support. I’m sure everybody is familiar with the scores that have come out, and the district’s theme this year is “Excellence Begins With Me”! We have mentoring programs, I know Councilman Johnson does a lot and Fannie and Mr. Lindemann do a lot. I’m asking the community to get involved and volunteer. If you can do one day a week it would make a tremendous difference for the better. I have started back at Oakland Heights by opening car doors, giving the kids high fives, just trying to build them up, because there are too many negative things being said about Meridian Public School District. Our children can learn and excel, they are just as good as the Madison School District, but the difference is community involvement, parental involvement and people just taking these babies under our wings and giving them all the love and support we possibly can and letting them know there is greatness inside of them. I’m going to be kicking off an initiative called Manpower, in the next month or so. I want to begin with city leaders by asking every man that can, to volunteer one hour, one day a week. You won’t have to read unless you want to and you won’t have to do anything awesome, just provide your presence in the classroom. Because some of our students are not exposed to men in the home, sometimes when there are men in the classroom they tend to straighten up a little bit. So, this Manpower initiative we are kicking off I wanted to begin here at the city, to ask our city leaders to get involved with this initiative, and I’ll give you more information later. We need ladies, gentlemen, we need volunteers. Parents if you have children try to read twenty minutes a day with you children. I doesn’t necessarily have to be a book, it could be a magazine, box of cereal, pamphlet, just anything, be creative and expose our children to more, because it is still my philosophy, if Meridian Public School District does not succeed our city is going to be in trouble. So I’m asking you all to grab hold to this school theme of “Excellence Begins With Me” and let’s see what we can do to be the cheerleaders for our students and help them reach another level. Because, we can all do that. Thank you all for coming.

Councilwoman Johnson said Thursday night is Buds and Burgers again! Please come out, down by the train station, Singing Brakeman Park. You can get about twenty tastes of burgers for about ten bucks and that comes to L.O.V.E.’s Kitchen. Friday night there is a Rails to Reels at the MAXX, and the preview is going to be the film the children made a couple of months ago that a lot of us are in. A little reception starts at 4:30 and the film shows from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. This film showed in Jackson with a great turnout. I want to thank the entire community concerning the program at the Kitchen, about 13 people showed up for the job fair, one has been hired and is working, we’ve helped one of homeless guys get into a shelter. We are proving that Meridian did come together for our homeless population and whether a lot of them come through or not, Meridian can say they have a place for the homeless population to come to be in and out. If they want
resources they can get them. So, I want to say I don’t use the word proud a lot but, I am proud of this community for coming together and making sure that we do show the least of them, that we cared about them. Thank you.

Councilman Thomas said you mentioned about Planet Playground, the whole community’s tried to come together to provide a playground that’s accessible to all people. From wheelchair, crutches, whatever and any age group. We have been working on this for a couple of years. The Community Foundation has agreed to hold the money until we get to that point. The Administration has been the leader in putting these things together. The Mayor has set a date to take some of those pieces apart, they are not destroying those pieces, they are storing those pieces, a local business has agreed to do storage; to use in the rebuild effort. A local civic club has agreed to match donations; I believe up to $10,000.00, they will match any $100.00 donation. So, if you’re looking for some way for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukah or whatever holiday you support, a $100.00 donated to that project would be matched by another $100.00. Kim talked about the children in the community being good; two young men that play football at one of the local schools have gone out and raised, I think at last count, close to $50,000.00. William Lamar and Jake Davidson have taken this on as a project, they are both teenagers, they have a lot going on in their lives by playing ball, doing Boy Scouts and a lot of other things. But, they’ve decided to help this community. When we talk about helping the schools and everything else, if we can get a few more people to duplicate or just halfway do what two teenagers in this community have done, we could accomplish a lot. To think that two teenagers can go out and raise approximately $50,000.00 to help in a project like this which will benefit all the people in this community; whether or not they are agile or physically able to do it. So, there are a lot of good things going on. Sometimes I think we concentrate so much on the problems, we don’t spend enough time on the solutions. But I think these two young men, particularly William Lamar, also previously put together a project for doing tiles that will be put out there. If you have been out there, some of you will remember when we put that playground together, where children could put their name on a tile. William has done double duty on this project. There are a lot of opportunities out there, a lot of people say I don’t have time. So, if you think you can go to high school, maintain excellent grades, play football, play soccer, be active within the Boy Scouts and still raise $50,000.00 in the community. You have the time; it’s just a matter of where you want to spend the time. Again, if you are interested in this, you can contact the Administration here, the County is also cooperating with this, or you can make a donation straight to the Community Foundation on behalf of Planet Playground.

Council President Johnson said we are The City of Meridian, whether Public Works the Administration, City Council, City Workers, it doesn’t matter, we all fall under that umbrella as The City of Meridian! So, when we try to make one look bad, we all look bad. The scores did come back and Magnolia Middle School is known as a successful school. They received a good grade, thanks to Mrs. Angela McQuarley and Mr. Sherrod Miller, they do a great job over there. We have great things going on at the Velma Young Community Center, we have GED classes, Afro Science class of African dance and exercise, Paint Your Feelings class using your emotions to guide your painting. There are a lot of programs
going on through the Velma Young Center. I encourage you to visit and take a look at what we have to offer. I’d like to remind everyone about the Halloween Festival that will be held on October 26, 2018, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. I partnered with NAS Meridian and the Care Lodge to bring this event. We will have the haunted house, the movie playing in the back with projector, music, face painting, candy, and fun for all the kids. This is a free event and family and friends are invited. There will be a community wide meeting in November was initially set for Veteran’s day but, I am changing that and I will let you know of the new date soon. I’ve been speaking with the Mayor about the Velma Young Pool. My vision is, and I don’t know if this will get done, is to make this an indoor pool facility. And this will bring a new sport to the community for the youth, and this could change a lot of lives. If you go to the Velma Young Park now, you will see we are changing the quality of life for a lot of our citizens in that area, that park is being used. We will have a cleanup at the Elmwood Cemetery this Saturday at 9:00 a.m., located at 10th Avenue and 24th Street. World War 1, also known as the First World War or the Great War was global and originated from Europe spanning July 1914 through 1918 it was one of the largest wars in history. An estimated nine million combatants and seven million civilians died as a result of that war. Out of the nine million that died in that war we have at least two dozen in the Elmwood Cemetery. That is why I am very vocal and determined to get this cemetery cleaned up. Hopefully we can get it cleaned and maintained; there are a lot of people in the community willing to help this cause. I believe it should be a landmark, because there are a lot of African American Men that fought in the war buried there and we should do something to honor them. It has been an eyesore for roughly five decades in the community; it’s time to change that.

Councilwoman Johnson said she had a very special server/dishwasher at the Kitchen today, and I would like to thank Councilman President Johnson, for coming in to help out at the Kitchen today!

An executive session was requested regarding economic development and pending litigation with possible action to follow. Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and unanimously passed by the Council to close the meeting to determine whether to declare an executive session. Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and unanimously passed by the Council to declare an executive session in order to discuss economic development and pending litigation with possible action to follow. The Council then went into executive session. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Thomas and unanimously passed by the Council to go out of executive session with the following action.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson to lift from the table, authorization for payment of settlement claim from Modern Landscape Design in the amount of $4,890.00. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: Lindemann.
Councilman Thomas offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:

ORDER #16642  ORDER SETTLING DISPUTED CLAIM FOR PAYMENT FROM MODERN LANDSCAPE DESIGN UPON THE CITY OF MERIDIAN

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.
Nay: Lindemann.

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