REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, APRIL 02, 2019 AT 9:00 A.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 William Washington, and followed by the pledge to the flag.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas 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-15 (Order authorizing applying for a CAP Loan.) Add (Executive Session – personnel performance.) Change R-14 (Order authorizing claims docket sectioned into two parts: Payroll, and Mandatory/Other - bonds, leases, taxes, office supplies, professional services, etc.) Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Motion was made by Councilman Lindemann duly seconded by Councilman Thomas and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to confirm the agenda with the following amendment: R-16 (Order authorizing reducing the CAO Salary to zero.)

Motion made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the minutes dated March 19, 2019. Voting yea: T. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: Thomas, F. Johnson.

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

ORDER #16717 ORDER DECLARING VEHICLES SURPLUS AND NO LONGER NEEDED BY THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND AUTHORIZING SAID VEHICLES TO BE SOLD

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

ORDER #16718 ORDER AMENDING ORDER NOL. 16707 DATED FEBRUARY
19, 2019 ENTITLED “ORDER ESTABLISHING ADDITIONAL DUTIES FOR CERTAIN EMPLOYEES’ SPECIFIC JOB DESCRIPTIONS” IN ORDER TO ADD THE LAST PARAGRAPH CONCERNING INFORMING THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHANGES

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 #16719 ORDER CORRECTING EXPIRATION DATES OF APPOINTED MEMBERS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

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.

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

ORDER #16720 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND ACCEPTANCE OF A COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE RODERICK AND SOLANGE MACARTHUR JUSTICE CENTER AND THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (MUNICIPAL COURT PROCEDURES AND POLICIES)

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

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

Councilman Thomas offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:
ORDER #16721  ORDER ACCEPTING DONATION FOR SPONSORSHIP FROM THE GREATER MERIDIAN HEALTH CLINIC, INC. (FOR THE 2019 HEALTHY HOMETOWN CHALLENGE)

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

ORDER #16722  ORDER ACCEPTING DONATION FOR SPONSORSHIP FROM BO HAARALA AUTOPLEX FOR THE MERIDIAN 2019 JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL

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 #16723  ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF DONATION OF $50.00 FROM JEAN S. WALSH FOR THE ANIMAL CONTROL DIVISION OF THE MERIDIAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

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 #16724  ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT WITH GREATER MERIDIAN HEALTH CLINIC, INC., TO PROVIDE MOBILE MEDICAL/DENTAL SERVICES FOR
CITY OF MERIDIAN EMPLOYEES

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

ORDER #16725 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A SUPPORT SERVICES AGREEMENT BETWEEN TERRY SERVICE, INC., AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (HEATING & COOLING SYSTEM)

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.

Mr. McAlister said the City of Meridian employees will be doing the cleanup and the demand by DEQ is that a qualified engineer will oversee the project and verify the closing of the after cleanup; planning, overseeing and closing.

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

ORDER #16726 ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSAL TO PREPARE A CLOSURE PLAN FOR NON-PERMITTED DISPOSAL AREA AND TO CERTIFY THE CLOSURE FOR THE CITY OF MERIDIAN’S PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING FACILITY

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 Houston offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:
ORDER #16727  ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSAL FROM ADP (ALWAYS DESIGNING FOR PEOPLE) TO EVALUATE THE CITY OF MERIDIAN’S PRESENT PAYROLL AND HUMAN RESOURCES PROCESSES TO CREATE EFFICIENCIES

And, Councilwoman F. Johnson 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 #16728  ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES AGREEMENT BETWEEN WAGGONER ENGINEERING, INC., AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (OLD HIGHWAY 80 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT)

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 #16729  ORDER AUTHORIZING AN EXPENDITURE OF $650,000 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019, AN E-ONE EMAX CUSTOM RESCUE PUMPER APPARATUS (FIRE TRUCK)

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 Resolution:

RESO. #6214  RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING $5,000 EXPENDITURE IN SUPPORT OF THE JUNETEENTH HERITAGE FESTIVAL
FOR JUNE 2019

And, Councilman T. 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 Councilwoman F. Johnson duly seconded by Councilman Thomas and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve the claims docket dated March 28, 2019 in the amount of $1,474,339.19. Councilwoman F. Johnson asked Mr. McAlister if I vote yea that all of the claims are above board and we have the authority and the responsibility to include in our budget and our payments. Mr. McAlister said that everything before you has been deemed true and correct. And yes everything before you is valid to vote on. Voting yea: Thomas, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: T. Johnson, Lindemann.

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

ORDER #16730 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE CLAIMS DOCKET BE DIVIDED INTO INDIVIDUAL AND STAND-ALONE SECTIONS

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 Lindemann duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to discuss R-15 (Order authorizing submittal of application for CAP Loan 1,025,000 repair Valley Road Bridge. The discussion was that the road is private after the bridge, and it is not a thru road. The road was closed to the public because it runs right through the plant and this was a safety issue with the public driving through the center of the plant. The CAP Loan would be around $6,000 a month for 20 years. The question was asked if this was an urgent matter that needed to be voted on this morning, and the answer by the administration was that the advertising needs to be done I think it can wait if the Council wants more time to discuss it at the work session. Councilman Thomas felt it should be voted on now. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann to Table the issue until the next meeting. Voting yea: T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: Thomas.
The CAO, Richie McAlister, made the Council aware that the Mayor has vetoed Ordinance #4520 (Rezoning Appeal RZ-19-03 1400 Beech Street). No action was taken by the Council.

President Johnson advised of the notification of legal advertisement for the following:

a) Safety Boots & Shoes (12 month source of supply)
b) Lease Purchase Financing for New Fire Truck

President Johnson called for the Mayor’s Report:

Mayor Bland called Wilbert Jones of Greater Meridian Health Clinic to speak about the mobile unit Greater Meridian is providing and to reveal that copays are being waived for the city employees. Mayor Bland said thank you for moving forward with health care wellness plan. Our workforce is aging and we are always looking at cost each year and the mobile unit coming out to our sites will help our employees better meet their health needs.

We need to schedule a work session, we are half way thru the budget year and we need to discuss funding on how things will get done and not get done. The lease payments for the police station will greatly impact our budget for 2019-2020.

We want to recognize The Foster Grandparents for being in operation for over fifty years, also Multi-County Community Services Agency Meals on Wheels for Volunteer Recognition Day! I want to recognize them today and all the people that make our community better. We have with us today Ms. Sabrina Wilson and Mr. Tim Putnam.

Ms. Wilson and Mr. Putnam said, we very much appreciate this award. We have 170 volunteers to enhance the services of the 40 to 42 non-profits in the state. The Foster Grandparent Program service four counties: Lauderdale, Kemper, Clarke and Jasper. Thank you all very much for this honor.

Mayor Bland called up Mr. Jonathan Brown, Eighth Grade Teacher at Northwest Middle School and his Student Council, to introduce them to the workings of a real City Council Meeting. The Student Council President, Fernando Atterberry - Vice President, Mya Miller – Secretary, Andreika Terry and Communicator, Louisa Jones.

Council President T. Johnson set a work session for April 9th, 2019 and he also let everyone know that he will not be here for the next Council Meeting; he will be on military duty.

President Johnson called for citizen comments:

a) Emma Barfield – rescheduled
b) Ogie Clayton – spoke
c) Melinda Vinson Northam – spoke
d) Jennie Jones – spoke
e) Nan Casciaro – no comment
President Johnson called for Council comments:

Councilman Lindemann said stay tuned for a list of community meetings I will be holding in Ward 5. As some of you know, I have been going door to door throughout the neighborhood, but that takes forever. So, I’ve got a community meeting set up, stay tuned for news of that. Thank you all for coming.

Councilwoman Houston said good morning everyone and again congratulations to our volunteers we do appreciate your service to this community. And to the student council you all look good and sharp, continue to excel in school, and for all the other folk that are here this morning we do appreciate your attendance at our council meeting. We meet again on the third Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. should you all care to attend and thank you for taking part in what we do here in local government. I want to thank the Mayor and Administration for coming to our community meeting, it does send a message that you care about your community. For Easter our Sowashee Egg Hunt will be held Good Friday April 19th, at 11:00 a.m. We know it’s about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we do like to do something for our children in Ward 4. Saturday, April 20th following the egg hunt at Highland Park, the Annual James Chaney Egg Hunt will be at 11:00 a.m. If you know any local farmers in the community, we are trying to pull together a team to do a West Meridian Farmers Market, we need your community support make this happen.

The meeting in Bethel Baptist Church a couple of weeks ago for the Ward 4 area was very good, thank you all for coming. Volunteer at our schools, if Meridian Public Schools does not do what she needs to do, this whole community fails. So we need to do what we can to be an active part of the solution.

Councilwoman F. Johnson said good morning folks, count on an Easter Egg Hunt at Highland Park, I haven’t got all the details yet, but they are coming. Thanks again for our volunteers. If we put a monetary amount on the giving and the time and energy you give to the city you save these charities and other organizations countless amounts of money; because everybody is having trouble with funding. I have on blue today and a lot of people have on blue, because it’s Autism Awareness Month. We have children with special needs, and we have children with incredible abilities. We need to make ourselves aware of any challenges a family has, get people to reach out and help those families. Those children are special and unique; they give back in so many ways. At Highland Park we are planning on doing some extra things for the Easter Egg Hunt. We’re going to be meeting in Highland Park and looking around to see what we need to do. We are going to get ready for the Mississippi Picnic. So, when everybody comes in from all over the world they can brag about Meridian when they leave. I’m concentrating on everything positive people have to say, let’s talk about positive things in Meridian.

Councilman Thomas said for many of us April is an interesting month, because of April 15th and paying taxes. Federal debt continues to increase by hundreds of millions of dollars and income is nowhere near matching that. In fact the federal government now has to borrow money to pay basic essential services. It’s an interesting time to live in America. I have four statements here that I want to make. I copied them from someone else. They describe how government is trying to operate whether it’s federal state or local. (1) You cannot legislate the poor into prosperity or legislate the
wealthy out of prosperity. (2) What one person receives without working for another person must work without receiving. (3) The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody else. (4) You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it.

Council President T. Johnson said good morning, I want to remind you that April 9th we will have a work session at 9:00 a.m. I definitely want to give a shout out to Public Works; they have been working very hard over there in my district; I want to let you know the people are very appreciative. Thank the Pentecostal Church of God, thank you for making that huge investment in that ward, it is needed. I think you are going to change a lot of lives in the future, I hope we as a city can help you move forward. And to the student council, thank you for coming out and thank you Mr. Brown for bringing them. When I was your age I had no clue about this. I was a grown man before I figured out what a City Councilman was. You guys keep pushing forward. I know a lot of people tell you that you can do a lot of things and you can, but you also have to take into consideration that your choices will determine that. If you make a bad choice it will deter you from a lot of things, but we all make bad choices in life and if you do, understand you can always bounce back, surround yourself with the right type of people that can actually push you forward. I’m a living witness of that. Today you may have noticed that I was voting yea to a lot of things, I think I will end my peaceful protest today, we are getting a lot of things done in our community. So, again to the administration, I appreciate you guys moving forward with some of the requests we’ve been making. The morale has been building in Ward 2 a lot of people are excited about the direction things are going, we are picking up the trash and building community pride. Thank you for that. April 25th we’ll be having a community wide meeting at the Velma Young Center at 6:00. And, on April 27th we will have an Easter Egg Hunt at the Velma Young Center. I encourage you all to come and be with us.

An executive session was requested regarding personnel performance. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Thomas and unanimously passed by the Council to close the meeting to determine whether to declare an executive session. Motion was made by Councilman Lindemann duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and unanimously passed by the Council to declare an executive session in order to discuss personnel performance. The Council then went into executive session. Motion was made by Councilman Lindemann duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and unanimously passed by the Council to go out of executive session.

The regular meeting was called back to order by Council President T. Johnson and a motion was made by Councilman Lindemann duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and passed by a majority vote to amend the agenda to add R-16 (Order authorizing reduction of CAO Salary to -0-) and open for discussion. Voting yea: T. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: Thomas, F. Johnson.

Councilman Thomas said we have the authority if we decide to use it but the question is what happens if we don’t like the way the Police Chief operates, we don’t like the way the Fire Chief operates, are we going to come up with the same situation saying we are not going to pay them? I think it’s a mistake to get into this issue. The Mayor said I think we need to go back in open session; he was informed that we are in open session. Councilman
Thomas said the motion before the Council is to reduce the Chief Administrative Officer salary to -0-. I assume it is this Chief Administrative Officer? Councilman Lindemann said correct. Councilman Thomas said not the position, but the person? Reduce the salary of the person or the position? If you reduce the salary of the position to -0- the Mayor can’t hire anyone. The question was how can we reduce it without reducing the position? It would have to be brought up again to get the votes to put money in there. If you want to get rid of Richie McAlister then you vote to bring the salary of Richie McAlister to -0-. Councilwoman Houston said I think we want to bring the salary of Richie McAlister to -0-. Councilman Thomas said that is even worse, because he can’t hire anybody if the salary is -0-. Who can he hire with the salary of -0-? Councilwoman Houston said that sounds really good, but we all know that is not the case, and that is how it was done before. Councilman Thomas said just because it was done before doesn’t make it right. He’s got to know what he has available. Councilwoman Houston said he knows. The Mayor said what is your issue with the CAO, and Councilman Lindemann said there have been many issues brought up over the past year and a half and most of the time what I’ve dealt with in public or in private and at what point is the dollar amount in cost to all the taxpayers for all the poor decisions that are made, the cost of litigation we have as a result of all the decisions that have been made, all the wasteful spending decisions that were made and spending that wasn’t even approved by the Council or put into a budget. How does the cost of that outweigh any benefit there is in keeping this individual as the CAO? I think just from looking at your report from last week, that’s a very small picture of what the total cost is for bad decisions that have been made. I believe the City of Meridian will be better served moving forward if we have someone else in that position. I would like to do that now versus later, so that someone else can be brought in as we enter into the new budget process. Mayor Bland said executive decisions that are made to shape departments are at the end of the day, decisions that the executive branch of this government are allowed to make, whether you agree with them or not.

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

ORDER #16731 ORDER SUSPENDING CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER PAY EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY UPON APPROVAL, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS A NEW APPOINTMENT FOR CAO IS CONFIRMED

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

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