REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 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 Pastor Ralph Henson, Life Baptist Church 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-10 (Order authorizing execution of interlocal agreement with Lauderdale County on Crossroads Phase II TIF.) Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Motion made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the minutes dated December 18, 2018. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

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

ORDER #16681 ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF LAUDERDALE COUNTY TOURISM 2019 MARKETING GRANT AWARDED TO THE CITY OF MERIDIAN’S EARTH’S BOUNTY FESTIVAL

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 #16682 ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF LAUDERDALE COUNTY TOURISM 2019 MARKETING GRANT AWARDED TO THE CITY OF MERIDIAN’S JUNETEENTH HERITAGE FESTIVAL

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 #16683 ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF LAUDERDALE COUNTY TOURISM 2019 MARKETING GRANT AWARDED TO THE CITY OF MERIDIAN’S MARDI GRAS FESTIVAL

And, Councilman Thomas 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 #16684 ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION AND ACCEPTANCE OF FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2018 HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM AWARD FROM THE MISSISSIPPI OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY (MOHS) AND EXECUTION OF GRANT RECIPIENT AGREEMENT (GRANT #M18LE258)

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 #16685 ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF HOMELAND SECURITY COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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

ORDER #16686 Order Authorizing Donation of a Reduced Cost to Rent the Frank Cochran Center allowing the space to hold the Martin Luther King, Jr., Breakfast

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 #16687 Order Authorizing Execution of Proposal to Instruct a Virtual Search Planning Course for the City of Meridian by Paul M. Burke

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 #16688 Order Authorizing the Execution of Software Service Agreement Between PowerDMS, Inc., and the City of Meridian

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 #16689 ORDER DESIGNATING MUNICIPAL DEPOSITORIES

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.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson to discuss agenda item R-8 (Mayoral appointment: Parks and Recreation Director – Gerard McCall.) Discussion, questions and answers were conducted between the Council, Mayor and Mr. McCall. Some members of the Council feel the department is operating fine with the people we have in place right now and a director should only be put in place after the open investigation is finalized. A vote on this item was taken. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson. Voting nay: F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Agenda item Failed.

Motion was made by Councilwoman F. Johnson duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve the claims docket dated December 20, 2018 in the amount of $1,228,804.60. 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 #16690 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AN INTERLOCAL COOPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI AND LAUDERDALE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI (CROSSROADS PHASE II TIF)

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

President Johnson called for the Mayor’s Report:
Mayor Bland gave a short preview and slide presentation of the Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report to look at where we’ve been and talk about where we are going. The Mayor started with a quote, “If you don’t know where you’re going you’ll end up somewhere else” by Yogi Berra. The Mayor said he has been headed to the same place since 2019, a better Meridian. We have made great strides in 2018 that we can all be proud of and we have even more to do in this year of 2019. We’ve been headed toward the revitalization of downtown, a major component was the opening of the MAXX; a 50 million dollar state of the art entertainment facility that opened its doors with our first class gala earlier in 2018.

There was 3,124 feet of sidewalk placed throughout the city. We have a great crew that does this for us and we plan for them to be just as busy in 2019. We have a sidewalk project going in on the west side of town right now, from Western Gardens all the way back to Oakland Heights. We’ve done downtown sidewalk improvements and at a lot of our schools throughout the City of Meridian.

As you know we paved over 12,800 square feet of asphalt during 2018, we all know we have about 800,000 in our paving account, so we plan to continue that paving work during the 2019 season.

Opening early 2020 will be the Threefoot Building; this administration has been heading in this direction on the Threefoot Building for years. Now, finally it’s almost upon us and in reality the work is going on, it started in 2018 and we look forward to celebrating its grand opening in 2020.

We have done a lot of work with playgrounds, in Ward 4, Kim’s ward and in Ward 2, Tyrone’s ward with the Velma Young Playground. In February of this year we will open the best inclusive playground in the state. It will be a place for children and parents, a place for children of all abilities. This project has been a public and private partnership that has raised a lot of both private and public money to make it happen. I am happy to see the people come together in this community to make Planet Playground happen. We were able to upgrade equipment at Bonita Lakes; thanks to a partnership with Blue Cross and Blue Shield. And I also want to thank Blue Cross and Blue Shield for their contribution toward the Velma Young Playground.

New businesses are one of the most exciting things to talk about. Downtown, North Hill Street, all throughout the city, there are small businesses opening. A new business near the Walmart on 39 is opening, and also on 39 an area we thought would be seriously blighted, it was the location of the Winn Dixie Store, it is now the location of Planet Fitness and soon a new bowling alley will open next to Planet Fitness. We are excited with these new businesses, because that is the area of town we were concerned about once Winn Dixie closed its doors. Other new businesses are Mimmo’s, they will open in the next week or two, Jimmy Johns, a physical therapy office and a few others.

We will continue with cultural events that are staples in our community; Night Market is a new event that our Cultural Affairs people Laura Carmichael and Terrence Davis introduced and it was very successful and will continue this into 2019. It will partner with Earth’s Bounty and the MAXX. The addition of these events will contribute to the livability of our city. A lot of small towns use events such as these to draw crowds to the community, and we do this as well to bring life downtown and into our city.
An Excellence in Accounting Practices Award was received by the city in 2018. We are very proud of that and the work that Brandye Latimer continues to do in her Finance & Records Department.

A State Water Treatment Plant of the Year Award was received in 2018; our water treatment is getting a lot of upgrades right now and this second time in the last three years that we have received the best water award for Alabama/Mississippi. I think this is significant, because last year in D.C. at one of these meetings I sat next to the Mayor of Flint, MI., before she started doing her interviews with CNN & MSNBC about their water crisis. That Mayor told me how completely devastated that whole city and community is, because of the water issues there. I think sometimes we don’t take into account some of the great things we have going on in our community like clean water and clean treatment facilities. That is really the bread and butter of our community. And sometime we take that for granted.

Another change you will see in 2019 is the absence of our traditional printed Annual Report. Today this is some of the highlights, the full Annual Report including the pictures of the Council and their information that were given to our marketing team will be included in that one and it will be released soon. But to save some cost this year we didn’t print as many as last year; we will be getting those out soon. I’m hopeful and optimistic about the 2019 year. Meridian has a lot of great thing happening, I hope we can continue to work together and head toward a better Meridian.

Over 25 houses were torn down last year through Community Development, We’ve had 10 houses purchased through our Adopt-A-Lot Program and we’ve done a lot of things to change the blighted areas in the City of Meridian.

President Johnson called for citizen comments:

a) Allen Shute - did not appear
b) Ruth Jones - rescheduled

President Johnson called for Council comments:

Various comments were made. The Council wished everyone a Happy New Year.

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