REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 05, 2019 AT 9:00 A.M.

Meeting called to order by Council President, Tyrone Johnson.

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

The meeting was opened with prayer by Dr. Rhett Payne, of First Presbyterian Church, and followed by the pledge to the flag.

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 the following changes: Move C-1 and make it R-14 (Minutes dated May 28, 2019 and October 15, 2019.) Remove: R-2 (Order authorizing acceptance of engagement letter from BKD, LLP to prepare the City’s FY’2019 audit.) Remove: R-6 (Order authorizing engineering services from Waggoner Engineering, Inc., pm EPA Consent Decree.) Remove: R-7 (Order authorizing engineering services from Neel-Schaffer, Inc., on EPA Consent Decree.) Remove: R-18 (Order authorizing engineering services from Kimley-Horn & Associates on EPA Consent Decree.) Table R-12 (Resolution authorizing sale of surplus property (Old Police Station) & authorizing deed execution.) Add: R-15 (Minutes dated October 15, 2019.) Add: to Citizen Comment (W. C. McMullan) Add: R-16 (Order authorizing decline of offer on sale of Old Police Station.) Add: R-17 (Order authorizing seven year- 50% ad valorem tax exemption of the Tru Hotel.) Add: Request for executive session concerning economic development and personnel performance. (Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

The hour of 9:00 a.m. having arrived the hearing as called for in Resolution No. 6239 regarding The Restatement of the Mississippi Urban Renewal Agency (MURA) Plan for bond limitations was opened by a motion from Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to open the hearing. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None. One name, Rhoda Cole was signed on the sign in sheet, but she was not here to speak on the bond, she was here to speak at the citizen comment section of the Council Meeting. There were no questions for the hearing.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to close the hearing.

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

RESO #6242
RESOLUTION DECLARING CERTAIN MUNICIPALLY OWNED REAL PROPERTY TO BE SURPLUS AND NOT NEEDED FOR MUNICIPAL PURPOSES AND AUTHORIZED TO BE SOLD AT FAIR MARKET VALUE (PPIN #12042)
And, Councilwoman Houston seconded the motion, whereupon said Resolution was discussed, passed and adopted by the Council by a vote as follows:

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

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

ORDER #16853 ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI, OPTING TO REMAIN IN NEGOTIATION CLASS FOR OPIOID CLASS ACTION

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 #16854 ORDER RESCINDING ORDER NO. 16852 ENTITLED “ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN ASCENT HOSPITALITY, LLC AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FOR STORAGE USE OF OLD FREEDOM PROJECT BUILDING DURING THREEFOOT BUILDING RENOVATIONS”

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 Resolution:

ORDER #6243 RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND/OR THE U. S. ATTORNEY’S OFFICE TO OPEN AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CHRISTIAN ANDREACCHIO CASE

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

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

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote to discuss R-2 (Order authorizing acceptance of engagement letter from BKD, LLP to prepare the city’s FY’2019 audit.) During discussion the Council was made aware that the engagement letter had not been received. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and passed by unanimous vote of the Council to Table the issue until the engagement letter is received.

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

ORDER #16855   ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF SUB-RECIPIENT GRANT AWARD LETTER/GRANT RECIPIENT AGREEMENT FROM STATE OF MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY

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 #16856   ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF HOMELAND SECURITY COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (TRAINING FACILITY) 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:

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

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

ORDER #16857   ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF LEASE AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT BETWEEN BEN NELSON
GOLF & OUTDOOR AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (GOLF CARTS FOR USE AT LAKEVIEW GOLF COURSE)

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.

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

ORDER #16858 ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND THE MISSISSIPPI POWER COMPANY FOR USE OF CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY TO INSTALL A PAD-MOUNTED TRANSFORMER (THREEFOOT-COURTYARD MARRIOTT)

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.

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

ORDER #16859 ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND THE MISSISSIPPI POWER COMPANY FOR USE OF CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY TO INSTALL A PAD-MOUNTED TRANSFORMER (BEHIND HARVEST GRILL)

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 #16860 ORDER AUTHORIZING A TRANSITIONAL DUTY ADDITION TO THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK
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 Houston and passed by a unanimous vote to Table item R-12 (Resolution authorizing sale of surplus property (Old Police Station) & authorizing deed execution.) Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Councilwoman Houston asked if the payroll issue that was discussed at the last Council Meeting been resolved. Mayor Bland said the issue concerning Park & Rec has been resolved.

Motion was made by Councilwoman F. Johnson duly seconded by Councilman Thomas and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve Section (1) Payroll of the claims docket in the amount of $1,211,621.93. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: Lindemann.

Motion was made by Councilwoman F. Johnson duly seconded by Councilman Thomas and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve Section (2) Mandatory & Operational Items of the claims docket in the amount of $795,516.16. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson Houston. Voting nay: Lindemann.

Total amount approved/passed $2,007,138.09 claims docket dated, October 31, 2019.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote to discuss R-14 (Minutes dated May 28, 2019 and October 15, 2019.)

Councilman Lindemann - We need to clarify; in the May 28, 2019 agenda packet there was only the minutes from that hearing and not the transcripts of the audio that was provided. I talked to the clerk before the meeting and I also provided a copy of edited minutes from that hearing and all of it was very minor and pretty inconsequential if anyone needs to look through that. I don’t know if the best way to do this is to table it yet again to give everyone time to review; I think I sent the edited transcript in advance, I’m not sure, but we do have them here today. The other issue would be that one of the items that were supposed to be provided according to the minutes of the public hearing was related to that incident that allegedly happened dealing with Mr. Scott Crenshaw, that audio was never provided, so it hasn’t been transcribed. We do have two audios recordings that were transcribed and neither of which was added to the agenda packet. So we would have to amend the order to add those transcriptions to the minutes.

Councilman Thomas – I haven’t seen any corrections and I haven’t heard the audio. I’m not going to vote for something I haven’t seen.

Councilwoman Houston motioned to Table the May 28, 2019 minutes until all Council had a chance to review them, motion was duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and

Councilman Lindemann motioned and was duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the October 15, 2019 minutes. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

The City Attorney, Kermit Kendrick and Councilman Thomas questioned the procedure in which the minutes for two separate dates were handled. I was determined that the minutes be handled as separate items.

Councilman T. Johnson motioned and was duly seconded by Councilman Thomas to amend the agenda and make as R-14 (Minutes dated May 28, 2019.) and R-15 (Minutes dated October 15, 2019.) Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Councilwoman Houston motioned to Table the May 28, 2019 minutes until all Council had a chance to review all the information pertaining to the issue, motion was duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Motion by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the Minutes dated October 15, 2019. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

President T. Johnson advised of the notification of legal advertisement for the following:
  a) Asphalt Mix (12 month source of supply).

President T. Johnson called for the Mayor’s Report:

Mayor Bland – Since we have an executive session I’ll recap some things real quick. Thank you guys that came out for the both the Candy Crawl and also the David Ruffin Day, Downtown Meridian had a lot of people and a very good day. We are very proud of all the things that are happening there, also very proud of a lot of businesses opening. It’s almost like every day we are going to a grand opening somewhere. There are a lot of small businesses opening around town right now. If you all hadn’t gone to Cookout right now they are open to 2:00 or 3:00 in the mornings and big crowds all day at that new restaurant on Frontage Road. Next Monday, November 11th we will be closed here at City Hall for Veteran’s Day and there will be a parade downtown at 3:00 p.m. On Saturday the 16th there will be a Magnolia Marathon at City Hall Downtown, it will begin early morning. On Thursday, November 21st, Bishop Gunn will be hosting out Third Thursday in Dumont Plaza. Friday and Saturday, November 22 & 23 we will have Christmas Mart at the MAXX. I want to encourage everyone to go out and vote today. Dr. Thomas and Councilwoman Houston, we did stripe North Hills Street. And I would like a date in November when we will have a work session, because some of the Department Head will be taking time off around Thanksgiving and Christmas, so we can work around the schedule.
Council President T. Johnson asked if Tuesday, November 12th at 9:00 a.m. will work for everyone. All were in agreement with the time.

CAO Richie McAlister asked the Council to amend the agenda to have W.C. McMullan speak at Citizen Comment concerning his water bill.

Councilman Thomas – Mr. Mayor, when will Neel-Schaffer meet with business owners on the 22nd Avenue Street Scape Project?

Hugh Smith – We are getting contact information to schedule a time for all of the parties to get together.

Councilman Thomas – Good, because several are asking and wanted me to find out when this meeting will happen, and I’m in favor of a public hearing, but that up to y’all. The second thing is street sweeping, is it back in operation?

CAO McAlister – When we bought the street sweeper that we have we also had a massive industrial sweeper that has since died. This sweeper that we just had repaired is not designed to do the jobs we have been doing. It was purchased to get into the smaller spaces Downtown. We are going to have to look into buying an industrial sweeper for the neighborhoods.

Councilwoman Houston – How long have we had the sweeper, it seems like we just bought it a couple of years ago.

Hugh Smith – Three years.

Councilwoman Houston – How long is it supposed to last?

Hugh Smith – If used properly it lasts a long time, but we are literally overworking this machine, it wasn’t designed to do the kind of chores we are using it for.

Councilwoman Houston – So, why did we buy it?

Hugh Smith – It was the Downtown Initiative and this machine was to get in and out of those parking spaces where you would have trouble with a much bigger machine. The plan was to buy a bigger machine to address the neighborhoods.

Councilwoman Houston – If it’s not built for neighborhood streets, why are we using it on neighborhood streets?

Hugh Smith – Because we are being pressed by the citizens and Council to do all we can with what we have, and that’s what we’re doing.

Councilwoman Houston – Right now we’re not doing anything because it’s busted!

Hugh Smith – It’s back working now, if it was used as intended and not for something it wasn’t designed to do, it would have had far fewer problems. We need both, industrial and small sweeper; we did not have the budget to buy the industrial sweeper, it came down to dollars. I think everybody had the best of intentions to do what they could, but that small sweeper wasn’t designed to do that type of work.

Councilwoman Houston – How much does an industrial size sweeper cost?

Hugh Smith – About 2.5 million, almost twice what we paid for this small one.

Councilwoman Houston – I think this definitely needs to be a conversation, because if the small sweeper is really not designed to do what we are trying to do, it is defeating the purpose, because now nothing is getting done.

CAO McAlister – Vice-President Houston you are exactly right in what you are saying. This sweeper we have picks up dirt, dust, party confetti, and that type of issue and, when you get to neighborhoods you have leaves, pine straw, sticks, etc., it doesn’t have the muscle to handle it. We are looking at putting together a funding package.

President T. Johnson called for citizen comments:
a. Melinda Vinson Northam – spoke
b. Rhoda Cole – spoke
c. W. C. McMullan - spoke

President T. Johnson called for Council comments:

Various comments were made by the Council Members.

An executive session was requested regarding economic development and 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 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 personnel performance. The Council then went into executive session. Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and unanimously passed by the Council to go out of executive session.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a unanimous vote to amend the agenda to add R-16 (Decline the offered amount for the sale of the Old Police Station) and R-17 (Ad valorem tax exemption for Tru Hotel). 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 #16861  ORDER DECLINING THE OFFERED PRICE FROM VAN LEWIS FOR SURPLUS PROPERTY PPIN #18975 AND 18976 AT 2415 6TH STREET (OLD POLICE STATION)

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 #16862  ORDER GRANTING 50% EXEMPTION FROM MUNICIPAL AD VALOREM TAXES FOR SEVEN YEARS (EXCEPT SCHOOL DISTRICT TAXES) FOR NEW STRUCTURE 519 AZALEA DRIVE (TRU BY HILTON)

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