REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 AT 5:00 P.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 Pastor Gary Morris, of Life 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 changes: Add: (Discussion of possible budget for FY’ 2020) Add: (Executive Session, active litigation) Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a majority vote of the Council to amend the agenda to add R-8 (Resolution to request the State Auditor’s Office for assistance on budget accounting such as the cost accounting system) Voting yea: T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: Thomas.

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 September 03, 2019. 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 #16820 ORDER RELINQUISHING ALL RIGHTS REGARDING A SEIZED 2015 MASERATI ORIGINALLY FORFEITED TO THE NEWTON COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE BY ORDER OF THE 8TH JUDICIAL COURT SYSTEM ON MAY 07, 2019

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


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

ORDER #16821 ORDER RE-ESTABLISHING PETTY CASH FUNDS FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2020

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 #16822   IN THE MATTER OF: THE CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT BY THE MAYOR OF BEVERLY PENNINGTON TO COMPLETE THE UNEXPIRED TERM OF DR. EVADNA LYONS TO THE MERIDIAN MUNICIPAL SEPARATE SCHOOL DISTRICT TRUSTEES

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, Lindemann.
Nay: None.
Abstain: Houston.

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

ORDER #16823   IN THE MATTER OF: THE CONFIRMATION OF THE RE-APPOINTMENT BY THE MAYOR OF OLIVER PEEBLES III TO THE TAXICAB ADVISORY BOARD

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 #16824   ORDER APPOINTING BRANDYE LATIMER AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN ON THE TAXICAB ADVISORY BOARD

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 #16825 ORDER APPOINTING BENNY DUBOSE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN ON THE TAXICAB ADVISORY BOARD

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. #6236 RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND SUBMISSION OF A MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY HERITAGE PRESERVATION GRANT WITH THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY (REA BUILDING JIMMIE RODGERS MUSEUM)

And, Councilman Thomas 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.

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

ORDER #16826 ORDER AUTHORIZING DONATION OF SPACE AT FRANK COCHRAN CENTER TO WEEMS COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER/NFUSIONX CROSSOVER PROGRAM (YOUTH AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM)

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

ORDER #16827  ORDER AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF CHANGE ORDER NO. 2 BETWEEN HEMPHILL CONSTRUCTION AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (NORTH WATER TREATMENT PLANT FILTER REMOVAL/REPLACEMENT AND BASIN REPAIR)

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 #16828  ORDER AMENDING THE CITY OF MERIDIAN EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK’S TRANSPORTATION POLICY

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.

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 $976,424.49. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: Lindemann.

Motion was made Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve Section (2) Mandatory & Operational Items of the claims docket in the amount of $1,080,000.00. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: Lindemann.

Total amount approved/passed $2,056,535.49 claims docket dated, September 12, 2019.

Councilman Thomas asked of the administration what budget is going to be presented to the public for the public hearing on September 23rd, and Brandye Latimer said the budget showing the proposed 2 mil tax increase.
Councilwoman F. Johnson asked if a budget has also been prepared without the tax increase, and Brandye Latimer said no, she has not been given any figures to take out of the budget. Councilwoman F. Johnson said what would be the next move on the administration's part if there are not enough votes for a tax increase and is that budget only a good budget if we approve a tax increase. Brandye said yes. Councilwoman F. Johnson asked what happens if we don't approve a tax increase. Brandye said than there is $800,000 that needs to be removed from the budget and the majority of the budget is personnel so it is most likely it would be a move from personnel such as furloughs, removing billets or whatever it takes to be within the budget adopted.

Councilman T. Johnson said so we are raising taxes to stay afloat of how we were last year, and there really won’t be real improvement? Brandye said no, we are raising not for just what we did last year, but we are also adding a grounds cutting crew for right-of-way cuttings that are not being cut right now, and some mandatory things we are adding to the budget, such as the PERS increase, insurance increases, also paving, the funds for the asphalt is coming from the use tax but you have to pay for personnel for the paving and people to do demolition of houses. So we have items in the budget for FY'2020 that was not in the FY'2019 budget. Councilman T. Johnson asked, with the tax increase what’s the positive return on investment that we will get for the city? Brandye said the positive investment return is that we will have sufficient services opposed to the services that were not up to par as far as what the citizens want as it applies to paving, grass cutting, transfer to Lakeview Golf Course, those are things we will not be able to do in FY'2020 without a tax increase. There is just no additional revenue coming into the city, but your expenses are steadily going up.

Council President T. Johnson said a budget meeting to review the budget will be held on Friday, September 20, 2019 at 4:00 p.m. here in this auditorium.

Council asked to see a budget with and without a tax increase.

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

Mayor Bland said a home ownership fair is being promoted by the City and Community Housing Initiative Team on Thursday, October 3, 2019 at the Tommy Dulaney Center from 2-7 p.m. This event will provide all the informational resources needed for a person to purchase a home, refinance existing home, renovate your existing home, learn about home equity loan approvals and down payment assistance programs. This will be promoting home ownership and neighborhood revitalization throughout the City of Meridian. We will have lenders, loan officers and realtors on site and many more helpful individuals and tools needed to inform. We are trying to get more homeowners inside of the city. An individual from the county came to speak with our team about two or three weeks ago and informed us that a large majority of homeowners inside the city really don’t pay taxes, because if they are over age 65 and their home value is less than $75,000, they don’t pay anything. We don’t get any taxes for those citizens until that home value is over $75,000. So, we are trying to get people, working people, young people that may be renting apartments or houses a chance for home ownership. We are very open to trying to push and promote home ownership within the city.

Councilman Thomas asked about the street sweeper repair and how long it has been out of service, six months? Hugh Smith said no, several, about three months. Councilman Thomas asked where it has been the rest of the time. Hugh said some of the time it was being
diagnosed for the problem and it has been down for several different reasons. He said the
delay in repair could be parts, he will check on it. Hugh said he has a list for paving for the
next two months and also includes the streets done the prior two months and he will send it
out in the morning. Councilman Thomas asked Hugh if anything would be done on North
Hills Street to smooth out the overlay. Hugh said he will be speaking to the paving
superintendent about that. Councilman Thomas said what about the holes. Hugh said those
are inlets that have to be raised and they are getting risers in to do that and they are on
order.

President T. Johnson called for citizen comments:

1. Melinda Vinson Northam – spoke
2. Rubin R. Little – spoke
3. Tommy Williams – spoke
4. Loretta Bennett – spoke
5. Cara Divelbliss - spoke

President T. Johnson called for Council comments:

Various comments were made by the Council Members.

Councilman Lindemann presented a three easel board display of the budget from FY’2017
through FY’2020. Councilman Lindemann said he has been in contact with the State Auditor’s
Office and they seem to think the city is not budgeting properly. That the numbers should
not be so wide apart between the amount spent and the budgeted amount, that a cushion is
one thing but to have over five million or four million in excess is just unheard of in your
actual budget and excess is not going into the reserves. I put up a comparison FY’2019
budget to FY’2020 proposed budget and there is over six million dollars excess. Since as a
Council we don’t deal with the day to day spending we can’t possibly know the real
numbers. We are building a budget on revenue we don’t bring in. I propose we vote as a
Council to ask the Auditor’s Office for outside help view where we are financially to do a cost
accounting analysis.

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

RESO. #6237 RESOLUTION REQUESTING ASSISTANCE FROM THE STATE
AUDITOR’S OFFICE OR OTHER OUTSIDE AGENCY FOR HELP
IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTING PRACTICES FOR THE
CITY OF MERIDIAN SUCH AS THE COST ACCOUNTING SYSTEM

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

Yea: F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
An executive session was requested regarding active litigation. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilwoman F. 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 active litigation. The Council then went into executive session. Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman T. Johnson and unanimously passed by the Council to go out of executive session with no action.

The regular council meeting was called back to order by Council President T. 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