REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 03, 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 Pastor Bob Null of First Assembly of Meridian, and followed by the pledge to the flag.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to confirm the agenda. With the following changes: Move #4 from the Consent Agenda to the Routine Agenda (Resolution declaring Old Police Station property surplus and offered for sale at 2415 6th Street.) Remove R-6 (Order authorizing execution of Franchise Agreement between Comcast of Meridian, Inc. and the City.) Remove R-8 (Order authorizing execution of Cooperative Agreement between Lauderdale County and the City for cleaning and maintaining of the Elmwood Cemetery.) Add to Presentation Agenda discussion on Payroll Processing System. Add Executive Session, potential litigation. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

After the executive session on potential litigation the regular session was reopened: Motion was made by Councilman Lindemann duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a majority vote of the Council to amend the agenda to add R-15 (Order authorizing request of LPK Architect, P.A. for information on Phases A and B of the Master Plan) 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 August 20, 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 #16805 ORDER DECLARING VEHICLES SURPLUS AND NO LONGER NEEDED BY THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF SAID SURPLUS VEHICLES

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 Resolution:

RESO. #6233  
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 #18812, 19208 AND 19211)

And, Councilwoman F. 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.

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

ORDER #16806  
ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF LAUERDALE  
COUNTY TOURISM 2020 MARKETING GRANT AWARDED  
TO THE CITY OF MERIDIAN'S EARTH'S BOUNTY FESTIVAL

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 #16807  
ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF LAUERDALE  
COUNTY TOURISM 2020 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 #16808  ORDER AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF LAUDERDALE COUNTY TOURISM 2020 MARKETING GRANT AWARDED TO THE CITY OF MERIDIAN’S MARDI GRAS FESTIVAL

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

ORDER #16809  ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF SERVICE AGREEMENT BETWEEN WASTE PRO AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN (MERIDIAN HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE DAY)

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 #16810  ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY/MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY (MDEQ) AND THE CITY OF MERIDIAN CONCERNING VIOLATION OF UNAUTHORIZED DUMP AT THE 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 #16811  ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF PRELIMINARY
ENGINEERING SERVICES CONTRACT BETWEEN THE
CITY OF MERIDIAN AND NEEL-SCHAFFER, INC. (22ND
AVENUE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT)

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 #16812 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF PROPERTY FROM BETTY S. JOHNSON REVOCABLE TRUST, FOR THE LOCATION OF A WATER LINE TO THE FRESH WATER TREATMENT PLANT

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 #16813 ORDER AUTHORIZING IN-KIND DONATION TO THE MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM-MERIDIAN FOR BUILDING PERMIT FEES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW CHILDREN'S MUSEUM AT 403 22ND AVENUE

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 #16814 IN THE MATTER OF ACCEPTING REINSURANCE PROPOSAL OF UNITED HEALTH CARE FOR GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN OF SPECIFIC DEDUCTIBLE FROM $125,000 TO $150,000 FOR CITY OF MERIDIAN EMPLOYEES
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, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: T. Johnson.

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

ORDER #16815 IN THE MATTER OF ACCEPTING UNITED HEALTH CARE MEDICAL DEPENDENT INCREASE OF ~5% AND DEDUCTIBLE INCREASE FROM $500.00 TO $600.00 AND THE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS LIST (PDL) CHANGES FROM TRADITIONAL PDL TO ADVANTAGE PDL FOR CITY OF MERIDIAN EMPLOYEES

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

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

ORDER #16816 IN THE MATTER OF ACCEPTING PROPOSAL OF DELTA DENTAL TO PROVIDE DENTAL INSURANCE FOR CITY OF MERIDIAN EMPLOYEES WITH AN INCREASE OF 11%

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 #16817 ORDER AUTHORIZING RENEWAL OF THE EMPLOYEE COBRA HEALTH CARE BENEFIT INSURANCE PLAN AND OPTIONS FOR CITY OF MERIDIAN CURRENT AND FORMER EMPLOYEES

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

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

ORDER #16818  ORDER AUTHORIZING RENEWAL OF THE CURRENT PRINCIPAL GROUP LIFE INSURANCE PLAN FOR CITY OF MERIDIAN EMPLOYEES

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

RESO. #6234  RESOLUTION APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE AMENDED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2019, AND DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK IN REFERENCE THERETO

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

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

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve Section (1) Payroll of the claims docket in the amount of $2,212,715.18. Voting yea: Thomas, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: T. Johnson, 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 $716,156.54. Voting yea: Thomas, T. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: F. Johnson, Lindemann.

Total amount approved/passsed $2,928,871.72 claims docket dated, August 29, 2019.
Councilman Thomas offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Resolution:

RESO. #6235  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 #18975 AND 18976)

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.

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

Mayor Bland said he wants to remind everyone about Earth’s Bounty this weekend on Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Singing Brakeman Park under the bridge. We are glad to announce the opening of a new bowling alley and trampoline park zoned in Ward 2, they opened Friday.

Today and tomorrow we will be meeting on budget issues; healthcare issues and things we need to talk about on Thursday the 5th. We will try to have everything at that time. We will try to have as much information to you guys as possible, we know you wanted to get the tax increase information, so you can make a decision as soon as possible. I know we have until September 30th to finalize everything, but we want to try to get everything to you on Thursday.

Also the Council brought up some questions concerning the Sela Ward Parkway/22nd Avenue. Mr. O’Keefe with Neel-Schaffer is here to talk about that project and discuss some of the questions you all have. I want you to know some of the process we have started on our end; we went to Tuscaloosa to look at other cities that have had streetscape plans done, Laurel, Hattiesburg, those areas, and found they were very similar to the streetscape plans we are about to have done. We also met with a lot of the property owners on Sela Ward Parkway to discuss certain things, because working with MDOT there will be things that we can’t control. As you know it is a MDOT funding process and we have to do certain things. We are trying to relay as much information to the stake holders as possible. A lot of people want certain things in certain ways, but everyone can’t have everything their way. We will get the stake holders, Council, Neel-Schaffer, property owners to work through the process and try not to leave out anyone.

Keith O’Keefe with Neel-Schaffer spoke: Neel-Schaffer has done a lot of these type projects and we are very familiar with the MDOT process, which is really important in moving these projects along. It’s your project at the end of the day and we want you to be proud of it when it’s finished. 22nd Avenue/Sela Ward Parkway is the gateway to Meridian and we want this project when finished to be a WOW, for Meridian as well as the visitors. We want this to be a compliment to all the things going on in Downtown Meridian; the Mississippi Children’s Museum-Meridian, MAXX, Riley Center, Weidmann’s Restaurant, Jeans Restaurant, Harvest Grill, the shopping, all that Meridian offers. We will have meetings
with stake holders later this month and I’d like to entertain questions now.

Councilman Thomas asked what areas the project covers. Mr. O’Keefe said from the North side of the 22nd Avenue Bridge to I-20/59. Dr. Thomas said to remember when you are talking about stake holders; the five people sitting up here represent all of the stake holders. And I would hate for a preliminary design to come back, but there haven’t been any preliminary designs. I want to be able to say Wow in a positive way, not Wow, what in the world were they thinking. The Mayor mentioned the Public Works Director; we represent all the people in Meridian, including those on 22nd Avenue. I want this Council to at least have a look see at what you guys are working on. Right now I have no idea what your plans are, what you are doing, what you proposed to the MAXX, what you proposed to anybody down there. But yet, we will have to let the public know and justify what’s going on down there. I know where the money’s coming from, I understand the deadlines. This project was approved this past spring, here we are in the fall talking about deadlines and timelines and all this. I don’t want the City Council to be left out. So, when y’all are doing this I appreciate the meetings with the Mayor, I appreciate the meetings with Mr. Smith, but I would appreciate you meeting with some members of this City Council.

Mr. O’Keefe said yes we absolutely will. We don’t have any preconceived notions about what the Sela Ward Parkway will look like, that’s the purpose of the stake holders meetings. We will meet with you all to get your input.

Councilwoman Houston said we made mention that we had paid for a Downtown Master Plan, I don’t know if you could get with LPK Architects to look at that to get some ideas or invite them to the table or however that works. But we have paid a pretty good money for a plan for Downtown and we would like to make sure it’s utilized in some kind of way. Mr. O’Keefe said absolutely.

Councilman Thomas said I appreciate your firm getting involved in this project, you are a good firm and done a lot of good work in the city in previous years.

Mr. O’Keefe said we look forward to helping with this project. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Councilman Thomas asked Public Works Dir Hugh Smith about the street sweeper, is it still sitting? Hugh said it’s being repaired. Julia Norman said the problem has been diagnosed and they are double checking the price for repair.

Councilman Thomas asked if we will ever get a weekly schedule of what will be paved in the City of Meridian. I’ve asked, and asked. Hugh said we have been working on 5th Street and there haven’t been any more scheduled. But now that we have caught up with North Hills Street we will be getting with you to provide a schedule. Councilman Thomas asked if anything was planned for this week. Hugh said they will be finishing up North Hills Street. After that is finished I believe the next street if Oakwood, but we have other streets lined up in that general area. Councilman Thomas said if you will send a list out on Mondays to the Council to know what you will be working on that week.

Councilman Lindemann said Mayor, Councilman Johnson and I asked about a HR Payroll Processing System, and since July I have asked about this every two weeks, when are we sending out a Request for Proposals for this. The Mayor said we started talking about this April/May and we discussed this issue with you guys and we have discussed it in some of our budget meetings. What we said to all of y’all is that when we met with our internal auditors and our state auditors, but our internal auditors first told us we needed to modernize our system. We already had a system that we were doing and instead of waiting until October,
November we moved forward with the system we have in place. Time Clock Plus. We do not currently have funds for a new system. If you want to go on with the bells and whistles wanted by the Council we need to put the finances in place to get this.

Councilwoman F. Johnson asked if the administration has done what the auditor recommended to be sure we see who actually gets each check by having each person come in and physically sign for their check or pay stub.

Mayor Bland said we are looking at a lot of things from our comp time to other things and we have not brought some of the issues to you because our attorney is still looking into some of the issues.

Councilwoman Houston asked is there a system in place that validates that these are real people getting each check.

Chrissie Walker Human Resource Director said that is why we went ahead with the Time Clock Plus System. So that everybody is accountable by signing in on the desktop or using the biometric time clock.

Councilwoman F. Johnson said did we do what the auditor recommended by having everyone show up and sign for their check.

Chrissie Walker said yes, they periodically have a roster signed by all departments.

Councilman Thomas said we don't have people getting paid that are in high school in Hattiesburg?

Chrissie Walker said correct.

Councilman Lindemann said if we want an RFP what are the steps needed because I have asked for this for weeks.

President T. Johnson called for citizen comments:

1. Melinda Vinson Northam – spoke
2. Johnnie Delk – cancelled
3. Tommy Williams – spoke

President T. Johnson called for Council comments:

Various comments were made by the Council Members.

An executive session was requested regarding potential 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 Lindemann duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and unanimously passed by the Council to declare an executive session in order to discuss potential litigation. The Council then went into executive session. Motion was made by Councilwoman Houston duly seconded by Councilwoman F. Johnson and unanimously passed by the Council to go out of executive session with the following action.

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

Councilman Lindemann offered and moved the adoption and passage of the following Order:
ORDER #16819  ORDER OFFICIALLY REQUESTING INFORMATION FROM LPK ARCHITECTS, P.A. CONCERNING THE CITY OF MERIDIAN’S DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN: MEETING MINUTES FROM PHASE A, ASSESSMENTS FROM PHASE A (I.E. SPACE NEEDS, LANDSCAPE, BUILDING CONDITIONS, PARKING, ETC.), AND ASSESSMENTS, PLANS, DIAGRAMS, AND STATISTICAL INFORMATION FROM CONCEPT ALTERNATIVES IN PHASE B

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.

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