REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2020 AT 5:00 P.M.
Meeting held via telephone and live streamed due to Coronavirus Pandemic

Meeting called to order by Council President, Houston.

Present: Thomas, F. Johnson (via phone), Houston, Lindemann.

The meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor LaBaron Hedgemon of Freedom Rock Baptist Church, and followed by the pledge to the flag.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to confirm the agenda with the following changes: Add: (Public Hearing @ 5:00 p.m. to Amend and Restate the City's Urban Renewal Plan.) Voting yea: Thomas, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas and duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to open the Public Hearing.

Tray Hairston of Butler Snow – The notice of this public hearing was published with the instruction to call in and I think there were two individuals that received the dial in instructions and they are on the phone. I will address briefly the purpose of this public hearing under the Urban Renewal Act and what the plan is intending to do; and I’ll let you, the members of the council if you have any questions you would like to ask of me or if anyone on the phone would like to offer any comments. I think we are going to limit those comments to two or three minutes and from there they can ask any questions as well. Essentially this is an Urban Renewal Plan of the City, one currently exists, but we are amending and restating this particular Urban Renewal Plan for the purpose of issuing bonds pertinent to purchase of the police station. We intend to issue tax exempt bonds as opposed to taxable bonds that are currently outstanding. We will be able to issue those tax-exempt bonds at a significantly lower rate and the city would therefore own the police station once the sales transaction is consummated. The Planning Commission has already opined to the validity of the Urban Renewal Plan, they did that back in November, so this is the second statutory step that the city would have to take to make sure everything is done properly. So, at this point and time I’ll pause to allow each of you to ask me any questions that you might have and then open it up to the individuals we might have on the phone and state who they are for the record.

Councilman Thomas – Do we have an agreed upon price.

Tray Hairston – Yes sir, we do.

Council President Houston – We are open for the individuals that are on the line for the public hearing.

Tray Hairston – Please state your name, the individual on the phone who has a comment.

Teresa Thornhill - Teresa Thornhill with Citizen National Bank – We have no comment at this time.

Tray Hairston – Is there a second or third individual that will be participating at this time?

Lee Meyers - Lee Meyers on the call, but likewise, I have no comments.
Tray Hairston – Hearing that I will receive any other comments or question from the council or callers.

Council President Houston – Seeing that there are no other comments or questions regarding this matter, is there a motion that we close this public hearing?

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to close the Public Hearing.

Councilman Thomas – Did you need us to amend the agenda to add the Resolution for the Urban Renewal Plan?

Tray Hairston – Yes, we will need the council to bring the Resolution to a vote.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to amend the agenda with the following change: Add: R-9 (Resolution to amend and restate the City’s Urban Renewal Plan.)

Motion made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve the minutes dated March 17, 2020, April 03, 2020 and April 07, 2020. Voting yea: Thomas, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

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

ORDER #16938 ORDER DESIGNATING PARKSON CORPORATION AS THE SOLE SOURCE PROVIDER OF REPLACEMENT PARTS TO REBUILD THE AQUA GUARD CONTINUOUS SELF-CLEANING BAR/FILTER SCREEN UNIT, WILL TEST AND RUN EQUIPMENT AFTER REBUILD FOR THE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

And, Councilman Lindemann 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: None

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

ORDER #16939 ORDER DECLARING WEAPON SURPLUS AND TO BE SOLD TO RETIRED POLICE OFFICER MARVIN WARREN AS ALLOWED BY STATE LAW 45-9-131

And, Councilman Lindemann 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: None.

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

ORDER #16940 IN THE MATTER OF: THE CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT BY THE MAYOR OF SEMMES FORD TO THE ELECTION COMMISSION

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, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

Present: Thomas.

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

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

ORDER #16941 IN THE MATTER OF: THE CONFIRMATION OF THE APPOINTMENT BY THE MAYOR OF LABARON HEDGEMON TO THE MERIDIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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

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

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

ORDER #16942 ORDER ACCEPTING SPONSORSHIP DONATION FROM MITCHELL BEVERAGE MERIDIAN, INC., FOR THE 2020 MERIDIAN MARDI GRAS 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, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann.
Nay: None.

Nnamdi Thompson of Government Consultants - I’m here to talk about bond issues per say. The report that Raftelis is asking to be engaged for is going to be needed for us to go out and sell the 40-million-dollar bond issue for the sewer expansion. I can talk about their price
for this, but I will say the report is necessary. When they did the original water and sewer report and presented to the council in October or November, obviously that was pre COVID-19. The updated report presented will be put in our official documents to market the bonds. But, as you all know the bond market has gone to hell in a handbasket right now. A lot of dealer in the marketplace are waiting on the sidelines to get out. We need something in there to show them that even though the water usage possibly gone up and collection may have gone down, but the rates are still sufficient to pay for this bond issue. Without that rate report it is going to be very difficult to sell this bond issue. I’m not here to talk about Raftelis’ fee, I’ll let them discuss that, but I will tell you that the bond professional will need a report to show the ability of the city’s rate collection at the end of November are still sufficient to pay for the bond issuance.

Council President Houston – So the report we did in October that we paid $47,000 for, why do we need to pay another $12,000 for seemingly the same report?

Nnamdi Thompson – I won’t talk about the fee, that’s for Raftelis to discuss, I’m just saying we need the report.

Councilman Lindemann – My understanding is that all that’s needed is the data that shows that we are still collecting enough revenue for water usage to pay off the debt service on the bonds if we go through with this. Wouldn’t that be all the raw numbers from our water department to show we are not having to struggle to service the debt?

Council President Houston – Raftelis can you answer that question?

Mac Underwood of Raftelis – I met most of you all back in October/November. The rate study work that was done for a five-year plan of what your rate needs to be to fund the capital improvement program and to support the debt issuance. The fund feasibility study addresses directly what amount of money you have to cover your debt service coverage. You typically want to have at least a minimum of 1.29 for debt service coverage. We put in the plan documents was 1.59 coverage. Since January we’ve seen a lot of bond issues require the additional support especially with COVID-19 and closing a lot of facilities. We worked with two other entities just a couple of week ago that experienced 15 to 20 percent drop in water and sewer consumption, which makes it hard for them to meet the debt service coverage. So, we will look at consumption since September of last year, verify that there has been no major drop in consumption, and also do a bond feasibility report that shows and documents that you have the proper coverage to issue these bonds. These bonds are a long-term liability and when people purchase the bonds they want to make sure that you will be able to pay them back. From that standpoint is a continuing disclosure issue especially since COVID-19.

Council President Houston – Since COVID-19 being a temporary situation, wouldn’t it make more sense to do the study after we are “back to normal.”

Nnamdi Thompson – I think we will try to schedule a rate agency meeting within the next couple of weeks.

Council President Houston – Why did we do the study in October if we weren’t ready to sell the bonds.

Nnamdi Thompson – We had to get the rates in place showing that you were actually collecting that amount in order to pay for the bonds. This report shows that with the decrease in collection, it’s still sufficient to pay for the bonds.

Councilman Lindemann – We have only been shut down in this area for about a month, what if this goes into another month, is it possible there might be a new set of numbers needed?

Nnamdi Thompson – We are planning to go out to the bond market within the next 30 days.
Councilman Lindemann – Why would we need a third party versus in house to do this, it seems a pretty straight forward.

Nnamdi Thompson – For me as far as a bond issuance you wouldn’t want to have that liability, this is a disclosure issue, you need an objective third party to issue this study.

Tray Hairston – This is a publicly issued document, the SEC are always looking to make sure there are no material mis-statements or omissions. We can’t give that opinion, we rely on someone qualified, there is too much liability to rely on an in-house analysis.

Mac Underwood of Raftelis - The cost of the study is not to exceed $12,000, and if necessary, at no additional cost, Raftelis will continue to work up to 120-days with the city’s bond attorneys to facilitate information needed for the bond market.

Tray Hairston – The money for the $12,000. study will not come from the City of Meridian General Fund, it will come from the bond proceeds.

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

ORDER #16943 ORDER AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF MERIDIAN AND RAFTELIS FINANCIAL CONSULTANTS, INC., (PREPARE UPDATED WATER AND SEWER RATE STUDY)

And, Councilman Lindemann 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: None.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to discuss Routine Agenda Item R-5 (Order authorizing acceptance of Traffic Analysis Proposal for the Sela Ward Parkway/22nd Avenue Project from Neel-Schaffer, Inc.) Councilman asked if MDOT required this traffic study because Neel-Schaffer proposed changing the lanes from four to three lanes. Mike from Neel-Schaffer said yes. Councilman Lindemann said we were under the impression that the council would have an opportunity to see and accept the design plan. The council decided before a traffic study they want to see if the design plan is wanted. Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to TABLE R-5.

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

ORDER #16944 ORDER EXTENDING THE WAIVING OF LATE FEES AND NO DISCONNECTIONS OF WATER SERVICES FOR 30 ADDITIONAL DAYS OF EMERGENCY CONDITIONS (CORONAVIRUS) COVID-19 VIRUS PANDEMIC

And, Councilman Thomas 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 Resolution:

**RESO. #6267**

RESOLUTION APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE AMENDED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF MERIDIAN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2020, AND DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK IN REFERENCE THERETO

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

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

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilwoman Houston and passed by a majority vote of the Council to approve Section (1) **Payroll** of the claims docket in the amount of **$958,901.02**. Voting yea: Thomas, F. Johnson, Houston. Voting nay: Lindemann.

Motion was made by Councilman Thomas duly seconded by Councilman Lindemann and passed by a unanimous vote of the Council to approve Section (2) **Mandatory & Operational Items** of the claims docket in the amount of **$804,824.39** Voting yea: Thomas, F. Johnson, Houston, Lindemann. Voting nay: None.

**Total amount approved/passed $1,763,725.41** claims docket dated, April 16, 2020.

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

**RESO. #6268**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE AMENDED AND RESTATED URBAN RENEWAL PLAN (LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER PROJECT); PROVIDING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH PLAN; APPROVING THE FORM OF THE CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENT BY AND BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE MERIDIAN URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY; AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CLERK TO TAKE SUCH ACTIONS AND TO EXECUTE SUCH DOCUMENTS AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO EFFECTUATE THE PURPOSES OF THIS RESOLUTION ALONG WITH THE ISSUANCE OF THE PROPOSED URBAN RENEWAL BONDS AND PURCHASE OF THE POLICE STATION; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

President Houston called for the Mayor’s Report:

Mayor Bland - I have an Emergency Declaration for the 11 & 80 Trunk Line Repair: On March 12, 2020, Kimley-Horn's evaluation of the Project 11 & 80 Trunk Line has a break and based on the recommendation of Project Manager Jason Gault it was determined an emergency declaration was needed to immediately repair the ruptured sewer line which released raw sewage into Sowashee Creek. Under the Consent Decree and under the guidelines of the EPA this is an illegal action that has to be addressed and time is of the essence. We contacted each Council Member along with the city attorney and determined that we must forego our normal bidding procedures to take urgent action to alleviate this condition.

We have been talking about the way we are conducting these meetings and here we are all in our masks. We are going to be asking of our business owners, you all see the numbers every day, have nine long term care facilities that have outbreaks of the Coronavirus, 17 deaths in Lauderdale County right now and 232 cases. It is affecting people from the highest income to the lowest and people of all races and ages in the city. We have about 56% of our workforce here and we are asking all of them to wear masks. We are having every department do temperature checks every day. We are asking anybody with symptoms to call in an get a swab test before they return to work. If they have been around anyone with the virus to quarantine themselves for 14 days. Next week we will require all of our employees to get a swab test, Greater Meridian will come out and test all of our employees. We have about 50 part-time employees at about $135.00 each around 6 to 7 Thousand Dollars. This is for the safety of our employees, we have so many employees working right on top of each other, even though we’ve asked them to wear masks there are still a symptomatic people and we will do all we can to keep our employees safe.

I want you all to know, yesterday afternoon I did receive a letter of resignation from our Police Chief Lewis Robbins.

President Houston called for Council comments:

Various comments were made by the Council Members.

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