

MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL CITY OF COLUMBUS, MS

**JANUARY 4, 2022
5:00 P.M.**

The Mayor and City Council met in Regular Session on Tuesday, January 4, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the Court Chambers of the Municipal Complex. Mayor Keith Gaskin presided over the meeting. All Council Members were present, with the exception of Council Member Diccico, who arrived later during the meeting. Also in attendance were the General Counsel, Police Chief, Assistant Police Chief, the HR Director and all other Department Heads.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Mayor Gaskin called the meeting to order and called upon Rev. Bennie Coleman, Pastor of United Faith Center, Columbus, MS to offer the Invocation.

II. CONFIRMATION OF/OR AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

III. APPROVE MINUTES FOR PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A. Approve Minutes for Meeting of December 21, 2021.

Council Member Greene made a motion to approve the Minutes for the Meeting of December 21, 2021. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

B. Approve Minutes for Special Meeting of December 28, 2021.

Council Member Greene made a motion to approve the Minutes for the Meeting of December 21, 2021. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

IV. APPROVE DOCKET OF CLAIMS FOR JANUARY 4, 2022.

Council Member Greene made a motion to approve the Docket of Claims for January 4, 2022, in the amount of \$581,772.49. Council Member Mickens seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approve Townsend Park Blues-Southside Festival Funding in the amount of \$15,000.00 per the 2% Restaurant Tax Agreement to fund festivals in the City of Columbus.
- B. Approve Annual Juneteenth Festival Funding in the amount of \$15,000.00 pursuant to the Interlocal Agreement to fund festivals in the City of Columbus.
- C. Approve request from Fire and Rescue Department to surplus radios.
- D. Accept letter of Retirement from Travis Jones, Project Coordinator, in the Planning and Community Development Department and approve payment of 240 hours of accrued vacation leave and send remaining unused leave to PERS.
- E. Accept letter of Resignation from Police Sergeant, Roman Sones, effective January 11, 2022.

Council Member Mickens made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Council Member Greene seconded the motion. The Mayor called for discussion, and there being none, all Council Members voted in favor of same, with a unanimous vote.

VI. REPORTS, PROCLAMATIONS, RECOGNITIONS AGENDA

A. General Comments from the Mayor and Council Members

Council Member Greene offered a statement regarding remarks he made at the previous meeting of the Mayor and City Council about sewer service at his

residence. After closely reviewing his monthly bill, he announced that he is not paying for sewer services at his residence.

Mayor Gaskin made the following announcements:

- The Survey soliciting comments/input from citizens for Propst Park ends Friday, January 7, 2022.
- Columbus/Lowndes and Caledonia Libraries will be closed the rest of the week due to COVID and hope to reopen on Monday, January 10, 2022.

PROCLAMATION – COLUMBUS LODGE NO. 5, F. & A.M. DAY

Mayor Gaskin presented a Proclamation to Columbus Lodge Number 5, F. & A.M. in celebration of the two hundredth year of its founding and proclaimed Tuesday, February 1, 2022 as COLUMBUS LODGE NO. 5, F & A.M. DAY in Columbus, MS.

MAYORAL HEALTH COUNCIL, Elois Smith, Community Health Director

Ms. Elois Smith, Community Health Director, came before the Mayor and Council to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the Mayoral Health Council, and its initiatives to promote healthy eating and physical activity in our community. This request was taken under advisement and no action was taken.

B. SWEARING-IN OF THREE (3) COLUMBUS FIRE & RESCUE PERSONNEL

Mayor Gaskin swore in two (2) Fire and Rescue Firefighters: Lukas Borntrager and William Boyd, as they recited the Oath of Office. Chief Andrews and members of the Fire Department Command Staff were present to present the Firefighters their helmets and insignia.

TREE BOARD:

- 2 Vacancies, 3-Year Term, Barbara Bigelow's Term Expired 12/18/2021.
- Kerry Pittman's 2-Year Term Expired 1/02/2022.
- Appointment will be made 1/04/2022.

Applicants:

- Barbara Bigelow
- Tanner Imes
-

Council Member Beard made a motion to reappoint Barbara Bigelow to

the Tree Board for a 3-Year Term, until December 18, 2024 and appoint Tanner Imes to the Tree Board for a 2-Year Term, until 1/02/2024. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY BOARD:

- 1 Vacancy, 4-Year Term, Robert Smith's Term Expired 12/31/2021.
- Appointment will be made January 4, 2022.

APPLICANTS:

- Robert Smith, Sr.

Council Member Beard made a motion to reappoint Robert Smith, Sr. to the Golden Triangle Regional Waste Management Authority Board for a 4-Year Term, until December 31, 2025. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT & APPEALS OF DEVELOPMENT CODES:

- 1 Vacancy, 1-Year Terms, Alan Lewis' Term Expires 1/07/2022.;
- Appointments will be made January 18, 2022..
- There are no applicants at this time.

VII. CITIZENS INPUT AGENDA

VIII. POLICY AGENDA

A. Discuss/Approve Derelict Property Docket

BOAZ TAX SALE PROPERTY, LLC

219 20th street North

CASE NUMBER: 21-0461 Vegetation and Property Maintenance Code Violation

The General Counsel called for cause number **21-0461**. Mr. Boyce Moody came forward and stated that he recently purchased three (3) abandoned

pieces of property in the tax sale and intends to remediate the property for rental purposes. General Counsel Turnage encouraged the property owner to meet with the Code Enforcement Officer to determine what the code violations are, and because he recently purchased the property, research must be completed regarding the legal issues and requested to table this case. No action was taken.

JOSHUA JONES

1918 15th Avenue North

CASE NUMBER 21-0475

Property Maintenance Code Violation

The General Counsel called cause number **21-0475**. No one appeared. Code Enforcement Officer Sasha James stated the property was in such a state of uncleanliness as to be a menace to the public under Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code and asked the Mayor and Council to adjudicate the property as such and that an Order be entered to such effect, requested **immediate abatement** and that an Order be issued for the property. Council Member Beard made a motion in accordance with Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code, and for an Order stating the City may remove dilapidated buildings or dilapidated fences up to six (6) more times in the twelve (12) month period immediately following the Order and cutting grass and weeds and removing rubbish, personal property and other debris no more than twelve (12) times in a twenty-four (24) month period. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

STEPHEN J. BLAKE et al

1514 21st Street North

CASE NUMBER 21-0485

Burned Structure and Vegetation

The General Counsel called cause number **21-0485**. No one appeared. Code Enforcement Officer Sasha James stated the property was in such a state of uncleanliness as to be a menace to the public under Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code and asked the Mayor and Council to adjudicate the property as such and that an Order be entered to such effect, requested **immediate abatement** and that an Order be issued for the property. Council Member Beard made a motion in accordance with Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code, and for an Order stating the City may remove dilapidated buildings or dilapidated fences up to six (6) more times in the twelve (12) month period immediately following the Order and cutting grass and weeds and removing rubbish, personal property and other debris no more than twelve (12) times in a twenty-four (24) month period. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

ROBIN CONNER

1513 21st Street North

CASE NUMBER 21-0487

Property Maintenance Code Violation

The General Counsel called cause number **21-0487**. No one appeared. Code Enforcement Officer Sasha James stated the property was in such a state of uncleanliness as to be a menace to the public under Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code and asked the Mayor and Council to adjudicate the property as such and that an Order be entered to such effect, requested **immediate abatement** and that an Order be issued for the property. Council Member Beard made a motion in accordance with Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code, and for an Order stating the City may remove dilapidated buildings or dilapidated fences up to six (6) more times in the twelve (12) month period immediately following the Order and cutting grass and weeds and removing rubbish, personal property and other debris no more than twelve (12) times in a twenty-four (24) month period. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

TANAYA WALKER

1106 16th Street North

CASE NUMBER: 21-0502 Accumulation of Rubbish and Garbage

The General Counsel called cause number **21-0502**. Ms. Walker, property owner, appeared and requested additional time to remediate the property. Code Enforcement Officer, Sasha James, agreed with the request for a **30-day** extension to remove the Rubbish and Garbage. Council Member Jones made a motion in accordance with Section 21-19-11, and for an Order stating the City may remediate the property with respect to cutting grass and weeds and removing rubbish, personal property and other debris no more than twelve (12) times in a twenty-four (24) month period immediately following the Order, with further notice to the owner as required by law and grant the **45 Day extension** to remove the Rubbish and Garbage. Council Member Beard seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 5/0.

B. Discuss/Approve Emergency Use of Warming Shelter at Propst Park (VFW Hut) as an In-Kind Contribution to the Homeless Coalition

Mayor Gaskin declared the weather conditions an emergency and requested approval of Emergency Use of the Warming Shelter at Propst for night-time only as an In-Kind Contribution to the Homeless Coalition. Glenda Richardson, the City's Community Outreach Coordinator, added that in severe weather, there could be 40 – 50 people utilizing the facility. Individuals must wear a mask and social distance. Temperature checks and COVID testing will also be required and two (2) professionals will be on site to ensure compliance. General Counsel Turnage will prepare a "whole harmless" agreement. Council Member Mickens made a motion to declare the weather conditions as an emergency and approve Emergency Use of the Warming Shelter at Propst Park (VFW Hut) as an In-Kind Contribution to the Homeless Coalition. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

C. Discuss/Approve Fixed Base Operations (FBO) Agreement for the City/County Airport

General Counsel Turnage apprised the Mayor and Council of the terms of the Fixed Base Operations (FBO) agreement stating that in the current agreement, the FBO is compensated \$48,000.00 annually (\$2,000.00 monthly). In the proposed new Agreement, the FBO would be compensated \$60,000.00 annually (\$2,500.00 monthly) beginning the new fiscal year, with the City and County sharing the cost to operate 50/50. Council Member Beard made a motion to table this request until the Airport Board meets and approves. Council Member Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

D. Discuss Proposal for Eligible Uses of CARES Act Funds

General Counsel Turnage was asked at the previous meeting to bring a proposal to this meeting on eligible uses of CARES Act Funds. Counsel Turnage stated that in his findings, there is no prohibition in using these funds to pay employees as Incentive Pay for future work and not as a bonus for work performed in the past. Mayor Gaskin remarked that City employees have been under paid for quite some time and he wants them to get a raise, but giving

them a raise from the CARES Act funds is not the way to go by it. These funds will be exhausted and the raises will stop. We need to be prudent in how we treat our employees. Furthermore, it's not fair to use funds when we do not have a true picture of our finances and asked to form a committee to meet in a different setting and discuss the complexities of this process. We need to wait until a CFO is hired before we move forward with this request. Pat Mitchell, Human Resources Director was asked if employees can get the 75 cents-an-hour raise the first pay period in January. Ms. Mitchell stated that the process would be difficult to extract the increased amount with fringe benefits in order to keep track of the amount spent from payroll to payroll and she doesn't believe giving a raise out of the CARES Act funds the first pay period in January is something we should proceed with. Members of the Council continued to discuss the matter at length and ended by stating that the raises will happen. No action taken.

E. Discuss Policy Regarding Dedicating (Re-Naming) Streets.

General Counsel Turnage was asked to prepare an Ordinance regarding Dedicating (Re-Naming) Streets. The Ordinance has been prepared and is open for discussion. General Counsel Turnage remarked that this Ordinance also includes Public Facilities and requires an application to be completed. Following discussion, Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the Ordinance regarding Dedicating (Re-Naming) Streets. Council Member Beard seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

THE ORDINANCE FOLLOWS:

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ORDINANCE REGARDING NAMING OR RENAMING OF A PUBLIC STREET OR FACILITY

WHEREAS, the City of Columbus is authorized to adopt additional laws pursuant to ordinance that are not inconsistent with the general laws of the State of Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the City of Columbus finds that there should be an orderly process for the naming or renaming of public streets or facilities.

THEREFORE, be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Columbus, Mississippi as follows:

Statement of Purpose: It is hereby found and determined that there should exist an orderly and methodical process for the naming or renaming of any municipally owned public facilities or the dedication of any municipally owned public street. Hence, this Ordinance is adopted in furtherance of the City's comprehensive plan and overall health, safety and welfare of the community.

Definitions: The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings as defined in this section, except where the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(a) "Public Street" means any roadway for vehicular or pedestrian traffic owned and/or maintained by the City of Columbus.

(b) "Public Facility" means any structure, defined space or any component thereof owned, leased and/or maintained by the City of Columbus or its political subdivisions.

(c) "Dedication" shall mean an unofficial naming of a municipally owned street that does not change the official street name. Because of life-safety reasons, including police response and 911 records as well as certainty in mailing addresses, the renaming of municipal streets is prohibited.

1. Procedure

Before any naming or renaming of any public facility or the dedication of any public street may be put before the governing body for consideration, the person, persons or entity wishing to advance the same for consideration must complete and submit to the office of the City Planner a current Application for Naming or Renaming Public Facility or Dedication of a Public Street.

Such application may be amended from time to time at the discretion of the governing body, but must contain, at a minimum, the following:

1. Name of the person, persons or entity making the application;
2. A biographical or historical sketch of the person or event for whom the street or facility is to named, describing their service, contributions or significance to the citizens of the City of Columbus;

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3. A petition with the signatures of seventy-five percent (75%) of property owners located on the property affected by the property naming or renaming or street dedication indicating their support of such action, including a sworn affidavit attesting to the genuineness and validity of the signatures attached to the petition;
4. A statement from the applicable authorities indicating the estimated costs the City will incur if the proposed dedication, naming or renaming is approved;
5. A tax map showing the street or facility to be named and all lots and blocks involved in the request;
6. A listing of all intersecting streets (in the case of a bridge or structure, the closest two (2) intersecting streets on opposite ends of the bridge shall be identified) affected by the naming, renaming or dedication;
7. A legal description of the street or facility to be named or renamed;
8. Verification from the Lowndes County E911 Address Coordinator that the proposed name is not identical to any existing street or facility name and that the proposed name will meet the guidelines for that agency if adopted by the governing body;
9. An agreement by the applicant to pay for costs to the City of the preparation and mailing of written notification to all property owners on the public street to be dedicated or owners of the properties adjacent to the public facility to be renamed;
10. A non-refundable application fee of not less than two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00).

The Completed Application shall be submitted to the Planning Commission for consideration and recommendation before the application may be considered by the Mayor and City Council as other matters that come before the Commission.

The notification set forth in Paragraph 9 hereinabove shall include the following information:

- a. The present name of the street or other public property considered for dedication, naming or renaming with a precise description of the area sought to be named or renamed;
- b. The proposed new name of the property to be dedicated, named or renamed, and a location where interested parties may obtain copies of the application for naming or renaming.
- c. The date, time and location where the City of Columbus Planning Commission and the Mayor and City Council will hold public hearings to consider the merits of the Application.

Public hearings shall be held, and legal notice for same shall be published at the expense of the applicant, prior to the application coming before the Planning Commission and Mayor and City Council. The notices shall be mailed to the neighbors as set forth herein by the deadlines required for notices of zoning changes.

2. Effective Date

This Ordinance shall become effective after passage and thirty (30) days following publication. The City Clerk shall cause the Ordinance to be published in a local newspaper with general circulation. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

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The foregoing Ordinance was proposed in a motion by Council Member **JONES**
seconded by Council Member **BEARD** and after discussion the Council voted as follows
to adopt the ordinance:

Council Member Ethel Taylor-Stewart	Voted <u>YES</u>
Council Member Joseph Mickens	Voted <u>YES</u>
Council Member Rusty Greene	Voted <u>YES</u>
Council Member Pierre Beard	Voted <u>YES</u>
Council Member Stephen Jones	Voted <u>YES</u>
Council Member Jacqueline DiCicco	Voted <u>YES</u>

Whereupon, the motion having received a majority of affirmative votes, the Mayor declared that
the Ordinance had been passed and adopted on this the 4th day of January, 2022.

CITY OF COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI

BY: _____
MAYOR KEITH GASKIN

ATTEST:

PATRICIA MITCHELL
Interim Secretary/Treasurer and
Municipal Clerk

F. Discuss/Approve Pay Scale for City Registrar position

Council Member Mickens discussed the Pay Scale for the City Registrar position. Currently, there is \$17,000.00 in the budget for this position and he is recommending the pay to be increased to that of other Clerks in City Hall, which is \$13.95 per hour/\$29,016.00 annually and the remaining \$12,016.00 to be taken from another source in the Finance and Administration budget. Council Members engaged in a discussion of this request, stating that it shouldn't be a full-time position. In the past, other Department Heads performed the duties of Registrar. Council Member Mickens made a motion to hire a City Registrar at \$13.95 per hour/\$29,016.00 annually and for the remaining non-budgeted funds be taken from the Finance and Administration Department from un-filled positions. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

Council Members Stewart, Mickens, Beard and Jones voted in favor of the motion. Council Members Greene and Dickey opposed.

The motion carried 4/2.

G. Discuss/Approve Closing City Council Meetings for In-Person attendance – Meetings will continue to be live-streamed.

Due to the increase in positive COVID cases, Council Member Stewart requested that the City close Council Meetings to the public, including the media, until further notice. Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the request to close City Council Meetings for In-Person Attendance until further notice. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion with the exception of Council Member Dickey, who opposed.

The motion carried 5/1.

CLOSED DETERMINATION:

Council Member Beard made a motion to go into closed session to determine whether it is necessary to go into Executive Session. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

All members of the public, with the exception of the Mayor, the Council, the General Counsel, the Police Chief, and the HR Director, exited the meeting.

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Mayor Gaskin apprised the Council of one (1) Prospective Purchase, Sale or Leasing of Land and two (2) personnel matters and remarked that these matters warrant being heard in Executive Session. Council Member Greene made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss one (1) Prospective Purchase, Sale or Leasing of Land and two (2) matters. Council Member Beard seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

The Public Information Officer then announced to the general public outside the Council Chambers that the Council was going into Executive Session to discuss one (1) Prospective Purchase, Sale or Leasing of Land and two (2) matters.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Mayor then asked if there was any other business to come before the Mayor and City Council. There being none, Council Member Beard moved that the meeting be adjourned. Upon second by Council Member Greene and unanimous vote, the Mayor announced that the meeting was ADJOURNED.

Approved by: _____
Keith Gaskin, Mayor

Patricia Mitchell
Deputy Clerk

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