

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

**FEBRUARY 1, 2022
5:00 P.M.**

The Mayor and City Council met in Regular Session on Tuesday, February 1, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in the Court Chambers of the Municipal Complex. Mayor Keith Gaskin presided over the meeting, and all Council Members were present. Also present were the General Counsel, Police Chief, Assistant Police Chief, and HR Director. All other Department Heads participated via ZOOM.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Mayor Gaskin called the meeting to order and called upon Rev. Aislinn Kopp, Associate Pastor of Main Street United Methodist Church, Columbus, MS, to offer the Invocation.

II. CONFIRMATION OF/OR AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Council Member Diccio made a motion to adopt the Agenda as presented. Council Member Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

III. APPROVE MINUTES FOR PREVIOUS MEETINGS

A. Approve Minutes for Meeting of January 18, 2021

Council Member Greene made a motion to approve the Minutes for the Meeting of January 18, 2022. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

B. Approve Minutes for Special Meeting of January 20, 2022.

Council Member Greene made a motion to approve the Minutes for the Special Meeting of January 20, 2022. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Request approval for payment of course fees for Fire & Rescue personnel, Fredreon Steele and Brandon McKay, for NFPA 472: Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations Course in Jackson, MS in the amount of \$470.00.
- B. Request approval for payment of course fees for Fire & Rescue personnel, Damon Estes and Dale Ballard, for Engine Company Operations in Jackson, MS in the amount of \$1,020.00
- C. Approval of request for reimbursement to Fire & Rescue personnel, Tiberias Lampkin, upon successful completion of NREMT Exam, in the amount of \$98.00.
- D. Accept letter of resignation from CPD Officer, Johanna Owusu, effective February 7, 2022, and approve payment of unused vacation leave.
- E. Approval of request for CPD Officers: Christopher Smith, Jaylan Barry and Lexus Ware to attend the "Training and Impaired Driving Enforcement Course" to be held in Ridgeland, MS at no cost to the City.
- F. Approve request to renew license plates for one (1) undercover vehicle in the amount of \$14.75.

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.

V. APPROVE DOCKET OF CLAIMS FOR FEBRUARY 1, 2022

Council Member Mickens made a motion to approve the Docket of Claims for February 1, 2022, in the amount of \$435,381.35. Council Member Greene seconded the motion.

Council Members Stewart, Mickens, Greene and Beard voted in favor of the motion. Council Member Diccio opposed the motion. Council Member Jones recused himself, due to family conflict.

The motion carried 4/1.

VI. REPORTS, PROCLAMATIONS, RECOGNITIONS AGENDA

A. General Comments from the Mayor and Council Members

Mayor Gaskin asked if there were any comments from Council Members. There were none.

Mayor Gaskin then made some announcements and offered updates:

- The City has three (3) employees that have had death of immediate family members and asked for prayers for their behalf.\
- Please see Item “I” on the Policy Agenda in regards to Donation of City Facilities. The Committee appointed to develop a policy will discuss this request and are not prepared to make a recommendation at this time.
- I'd like to remind everyone that February is Black History Month. Citizens are encouraged to attend all community programs, school functions, and events that highlight this important month. One event I want to make everyone aware of is O. N. Pruitt's Possum Town Exhibit: Photographing Trouble and Resilience in the American South. This exhibit will be at Columbus Arts Council from February 4 until February 23, 2022. The opening Reception will be Thursday, February 3, 2022 from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. The exhibit features images of Columbus as photographed by O. N. Pruitt. Dr. Berkley Hudson, retired professor of UNC, is excited to bring this exhibit to Columbus in hopes “the photographs will provide a common ground of understanding about the past, the present and the future of a place that I love and a place that I will always call home.”
- A Happy Birthday to Code Enforcement Officer, Sasha James, whose birthday is today.
- As many of you know, we are in the process of revising a Master Plan for Propst Park. Kevin Stafford of Neel-Schaffer, Inc. and his team have been tasked with this. After meetings and public input via surveys, we are now ready to hold a public hearing to discuss the Master Plan. The meeting will be held Monday, February 7, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at the Lower Level of the Trotter Convention Center. The hearing is open to the public. Please wear masks.

- Last week I received a phone call notifying me that Columbus has been approved for a \$1,045,863.00 Grant from the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) for a massive project on **5th Street in Downtown Columbus**! I appreciate the call from Northern District Highway Commissioner John Caldwell to share this incredible news with us. The City of Columbus thanks MDOT for the Grant and also Kevin Stafford and Neel-Schaffer Engineering for the design work and submitting the project successfully to MDOT following years of work on this area.
- I wanted to talk to each Council Member individually about the proposed Marshal position, but this is not permitted; therefore, I am presenting it to you in this setting. The Council discussed the position briefly, Members of the Council weighed in on the pros and cons of hiring a Marshal. The Police Chief did not agree with hiring a Marshal, but hire additional officers, increase the pay for officers, purchase new vehicles, radios and equipment. Mayor Gaskin remarked that the Chief's comments were contrary to the comments made when the topic was originally discussed. Discussion of this request was moved to Executive Session for further discussion.

B. SWEARING-IN OF TWO (2) COLUMBUS FIRE & RESCUE PERSONNEL

Mayor Gaskin swore in two (2) Fire and Rescue Firefighters: Brandon Wade and Tiberias Lampkin, 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. (The third firefighter could not be present).

C. WAGGONER ARPA NEEDS ASSESSMENT PRESENTATION

Members on the Waggoner Team were present and discussed ARPA Needs Assessment on how to best utilize the \$5.7 million dollars in ARPA funds. Members of the Council reminded Waggoner that \$1.3 million dollars had been earmarked for Premium Pay for City employees and should be excluded from the equation. The Mayor and Council took their Needs Assessment presentation under advisement.

D. LOBBYIST CONSULTANTS

James Reynolds, Reynolds Capitol Consulting
Worth Thomas, Worth Thomas Consulting (in person)
Roy Smith, Woolfolk & Mattox Consulting (via ZOOM)

Worth Thomas, with Worth Thomas Consulting introduced his staff members and distributed ways they can provide lobbying and government relations consulting services to the City of Columbus.

Roy Smith, Woolfolk & Mattox Consulting participated in the meeting via ZOOM and discussed ways they can provide lobbying and governmental relations consulting services to the City of Columbus.

James Reynolds, Reynolds Capitol Consulting, sent a letter of interest in becoming a Lobbyist for the City of Columbus.

The Mayor and Council accepted these proposals and took them under consideration.

E. BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT & APPEALS OF DEVELOPMENT CODES:

- 2 Vacancies, 1-Year Terms, Alan Lewis' Term Expired 1/07/2022 and Kevin Stafford's Term Expires 3/03/2022.
- One applicant must be in the Fire Protection Service or Contractor and the second applicant must be an Engineer.
- Appointments will be made 3/01/2022.

APPLICANTS:
Kevin Stafford

VII. CITIZENS INPUT AGENDA

A. Mrs. Joyce Doughty

Mrs. Joyce Doughty participated in the meeting via ZOOM with a complaint of Facebook postings/comments being deleted. Public Information Officer remarked that this was not done intentionally, but accidentally and apologized. The Council discussed the City's Facebook page and the purpose of it.

Council Member Greene made a motion to utilize the Facebook platform for informational purposes only and not allow public comments. Council Member Mickens seconded the motion.

Council Members Mickens, Greene and Dicicco voted in favor of the motion. Council Members Stewart, Beard and Jones opposed the motion, which presented a tie vote.

Mayor Gaskin voted in opposition of the motion; therefore the motion failed.

- B. Mr. Joe Roby** – Mr. Roby had an emergency prior to the meeting and will not be present.

VIII. POLICY AGENDA

A. Discuss/Approve Derelict Property Docket

SYLVESTER MARKS

212 Conway Drive

CASE NUMBER 21-0136

**Property Maintenance Code Violation
Vegetation**

The General Counsel called cause number **21-0136**. 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 Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

RICKY FORRESTER

1016 Moss Street

CASE NUMBER 21-0496

Abandoned Structure

The General Counsel called cause number **21-0496**. 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 Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

B. Discuss/Approve Installation of One Speed Hump on Beech Street

Kevin Stafford dba Neel-Schaffer, Inc. discussed the request for a Speed Hump on Beech Street, stating that they received 60% of signatures from citizens on Beech Street that are in agreement with the Speed Humps. Council Member Greene made a motion to approve the installation of a Speed Hump on Beech Street. Council Member Diccio seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

C. Discuss/Approve Low Quote of \$13,515.00 for Suncoast Infrastructure for Beech Street Drainage Cleaning and CCTV Work

Kevin Stafford remarked that the Use Tax funds will be used for this project. Council Member Greene made a motion to approve the Low Quote in the amount of \$13,515.00 for Suncoast Infrastructure for Beech Street Drainage Cleaning and CCTV Work. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

D. Discuss/Approve increasing Minimum Approval Threshold to 75% Owner Request for Traffic Calming Devices

The Council requested that Kevin Stafford contact neighboring cities regarding percentage approval to install Traffic Calming Devices. Mr. Stafford has completed this study and request the Council to approve increasing the Minimum Approval Threshold to 75% Owner Request. Council Member Jones made a motion to accept Kevin Stafford's recommendation to approve increasing the Minimum Approval Threshold to 75% Owner Request for Traffic Calming Devices. Council Member Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

E. Discuss/Approve Purchase of Reserve Fire Truck in the amount of \$205,000.00 using Insurance Rebate Funds.

Fire Chief Martin Andrews reported that he would like to purchase a 2014 Reserve Fire Truck in the amount of \$205,000.00 out of the Insurance Rebate Funds. Council Member Beard made a motion to approve the request to purchase a 2014 Fire Truck totaling \$205,000.00 using Insurance Rebate Funds. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

F. Discuss/Approve Request for Funding for City Hall Courtroom Acoustics Project and to select JMorgan Company, LLC, the lowest bidder, as the contractor to complete this project in the amount of \$8,697.00.

George Irby, Community Development Coordinator, came forward and distributed the proposal from JMorgan Company, LLC in the amount of \$18,232.00, which includes materials, Labor and Equipment to install twenty-two (22) sound panels in the Court Room in City Hall. Council Member Jones made a motion to accept the Proposal from JMorgan Company, LLC in the amount of \$18,232.00 to install twenty-two (22) sound panels in the Court Room in City Hall. Council Member Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

G. Discuss Blight Remediation for City of Columbus

George Irby discussed efforts in cleaning up the City of Columbus and remarked that there are currently 240 Active Dilapidated cases in the City and appealed to Waggoner Engineers to allocate \$1 million dollars of ARPA funds for Blight Remediation to clean up the City. Council Member Mickens made a motion to table this request. Council Member Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

H. Discuss COO Hiring Update

Members of the Council requested an update on the COO Hiring. Members of the Selection Committee apprised the Council on the status of the COO position. The Council then engaged in a discussion of the hiring process. Council Member Beard made a motion to move discussion of this item to Executive Session. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

I. Discuss Donation of City Facilities Policy (A request has been made for Juneteenth Celebration in June 2022).

This matter was discussed earlier in the meeting.

LOBBYIST:

Council Member Jones made a motion to negotiate an Agreement with Worth Thomas Consultants. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

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 Beard 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.

Mayor Gaskin apprised the Council of three (3) Personnel Matters to be discussed in Executive Session, pursuant to Section 25-41-7(4)(a) of the Open Meetings Act as they relate to the job performance, character, professional competence of persons holding a specific position in the department. The Council will also discuss two (2) matters that were moved from the Agenda to Executive Session to be discussed. Council Member Greene made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss five (5) Personnel Matters. Council Member Beard seconded the motion.

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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 five Personnel 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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