

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

**JUNE 7, 2022
5:00 P.M.**

The Mayor and City Council met in Regular Session on Tuesday, June 7, 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, the CFO, the COO, Police Chief, Assistant Police Chief, HR Director, and all other Department Heads.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Mayor Gaskin called the meeting to order and called upon George Irby, Member of Missionary Union Baptist Church, Columbus, MS, to offer the Invocation.

Mayor Gaskin also paused for a moment of silence, offered thoughts and prayers in the passing of Vice-Mayor Mickens' brother.

II. CONFIRMATION OF/OR AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Council Member Greene made a motion to adopt the Agenda as presented, with one (1) addition to the Policy Agenda. Council Member Diccico 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 from Meeting of May 17, 2022**
- B. Approve Minutes from Special Meeting of May 16, 2022**
- C. Approve Minutes from Special Meeting of May 18, 2022**

Council Member Diccico made a motion to approve the Minutes for the Meeting of May 17, 2022, Special Meetings of May 16, 2022 and May 18, 2022. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approve request for Planning & Community Development Director, George Irby and Council Member Beard to attend the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Conference, to be held in Point Clear, AL, August 10-12, 2022 at an estimated cost of \$2,470.00 (lodging, registration fees, travel and reimbursement for meal expenses).
- B. Approve request for Drug Administrator, Leonardo Dismukes, and Judge Gary Goodwin to attend the 2022 Mississippi Association of Drug Court Professionals Training Conference, August 24 – 26, 2022 in Biloxi, MS and approve the estimated cost of \$1,593.34 for registration fees, lodging, travel and reimbursement for meal expenses.
- C. Ratify permit request submitted by Cherie Labat, on behalf of the Columbus Municipal School District, to host an “End of School Year Block Party” that was held May 27, 2022 from 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., blocking of McCrary Road at Forrest Boulevard up to Maple Street.
- D. Accept letter of resignation from CPD Investigator, Kaetlyn Hicks, effective June 9, 2022.
- E. Approve permit request submitted by Tommy L. Williams and Debra Williams, on behalf of Bible Way Progressive COGIC, to host a “Youth Outreach Fun Day” to be held on July 16, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at 426 Military Road blocking 5th Avenue North and Military Road to the next block and the intersection of 4th Avenue North.
- F. Approve permit request submitted by Julie Parker, on behalf of the Community Benefit Committee, to host a “Southside Clean-Up Day for Neighbor” to be held on June 11, 2022 from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. blocking 6th Street South between 5th Avenue South and 6th Avenue South.
- G. Approve request for Fire and Rescue personnel Captains Marco Rodrigue and Wes Mims to attend “HSART Training” to be held in Grenada, MS (Camp McCain), and approve payment of registration, travel and reimbursement of meal expenses in the amount of \$200.00.
- H. Approve request for Fire and Rescue personnel, Captain Dale Ballard, to attend “MS Fire Burn Camp” to be held in Pearl, MS, and approve payment of registration, travel and reimbursement of meal expenses in the amount of \$50.00.

Council Member Mickens made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Council Member Stewart 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

Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the Docket of Claims for June 7, 2022, in the amount of \$525,970.56. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

VI. REPORTS, PROCLAMATIONS, RECOGNITIONS AGENDA

A. Mayor Gaskin asked if any Council Members had any comments/announcements. There were no comments.

Mayor Gaskin made the following announcements/observations:

- Mayor Gaskin read an excerpt from the 2022 Proclamation commemorating the Birthday of the U. S. Army and proclaimed June 14, 2022 as the 247th Birthday of the United States Army in Columbus and commends its observances to all citizens.
- Mayor Gaskin then announced that there are several community & school events going on in Columbus this summer: Columbus-Lowndes Public Library has several summer programs; the City-sponsored program - Reclaiming Our Youth, Mission Acceleration, Fire Academy, Recreation Summer Camps, CMSD Summer programs, EMCC, County Schools, Area Churches, and MUW will have summer programs to keep our children engaged. Mayor Gaskin encouraged everyone to stay safe and have a productive summer.
- There will be a Community Parade by "A Season of Change" organization this Saturday, June 11, 2022 at noon and will begin at the Police Department and end at the Boys and Girls Club. This event has been organized by citizens.
- There will be a Stage Play "Grown Man Issues" at the Trotter Convention Center on Sunday, June 12, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

B. Board Vacancies

Jammie Garrett, COO, announced vacancies on various boards and remarked that no appointment will be made tonight.

COLUMBUS HOUSING AUTHORITY

1 Vacancy, 5-Year Term, Willie Byrd's Term Expires 6/20/2022.

Appointment will be made June 21, 2022.

APPLICANTS:

- Willie Byrd
- Brenda J. Smith Wilson
- Victor Salter
- Martin Andrews

GOLDEN TRIANGLE AIRPORT BOARD

1 Vacancy, 5-Year Term, Gawyn Mitchell's Term Expires 6/20/2022.

Appointment will be made June 21, 2022.

APPLICANT:

- Gawyn Mitchell

CITY UTILITIES COMMISSION

1 Vacancy, 5-Year Term, Jimmy Graham's Term Expires 6/30/2022.

Appointment will be made July 5, 2022.

APPLICANT:

Brenda Lathan

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT & APPEALS OF DEVELOPMENT CODES

1 Vacancy, 3-Year Term, Quinn Brislin's Term Expires 7/02/2022.

Appointment will be made July 5, 2022.

APPLICANT:

Quinn Brislin

C. Jim Brigham, CFO, Financial/Audit Update

Financial Update, CFO

James Brigham, CFO, came before the Mayor and Council and gave a financial update. The Cash balances for May 2022 was \$5,671,449.27, which is an increase of \$1,441,699.78 compared to the same period in 2021. The Reserve Fund balance is \$1,506,874.80, which includes \$553,695.84 of Cares Funds. The current total General Fund balance is \$17,397,871.38, which is an increase

of \$2,912,182.60 compared to the same period in 2021. ARPA Funds available are \$2,897,654.12. Special Revenue funds total \$3,809,126.64, which is a decrease of \$501,117.92 compared to the same period in 2021. Sales Tax Collection for June 2022 are \$1,008,525.00 decreased by \$1,627.43, compared to the same period in 2021. All Department Operating Budgets are tracking on point and not over. Mr. Brigham then gave an oral update on the 2020 Audit.

VII. CITIZENS INPUT AGENDA

A. Ms. Kenosha Shaw, G-Blu Consulting (Stage Play)

Ms. Kenosha Shaw, G-Blu Consulting (Stage Play), Mr. Marc Raby and Ms. Claudia Jordan, participated in the meeting via ZOOM to announce that they will be in Columbus at the Trotter Convention Center on Sunday, June 12, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. performing a Stage Play, "Grown Man Issues". Mr. Raby, spokesperson, shared how elated he was to participate in a Council Meeting and also to have the opportunity to come to Columbus and perform. During this tour; Columbus is the only Mississippi city they will be performing. Mayor Gaskin welcomed them to Columbus.

B. Ms. Geraldine Petty, Morningside Ditch

Ms. Geraldine Petty came before the Mayor and Council with concerns about Morningside Ditch, an overgrown ditch behind her house. She lives at 2504 – 22nd Avenue North. Neighbors on the same street have the same complaint. Ms. Petty reported that the ditch is overgrown and has snakes in it. She recently walked upon a snake, became startled, and in an attempt to leave the scene, she twisted left ankle, fell and injured her wrist, requiring surgery. Ms. Petty requested that the ditch be constructed like the one on 14th Avenue. Mayor Gaskin apologized to Ms. Petty's injuries and will look into this matter.

C. Mr. George Irby, Wrecker Service Policy

Mr. George Irby appeared before the Mayor and Council regarding concerns about the City's Wrecker Service Policy. Mr. Irby reported that a citizen was involved in an accident on a private lot that did not involve a collision with another vehicle. The next Wrecker on rotation appeared at the scene and attempted to tow the vehicle. Mr. Irby remarked that the automobile was drivable and did not need to be towed. The driver was charged \$235.00, which exceeds the maximum towing amount of \$195.00 if the vehicle was towed; however, it was not.. Mr. Irby then requested that the policy can be reviewed. Council Member Jones requested the COO to schedule a meeting with the Wrecker Committee and discuss this matter further.

VIII. POLICY AGENDA

A. Discuss/Approve Derelict Property Docket

WILLIAM THOMAS, SR.

6th Street South

**CASE NUMBER: 22-0115 Accumulation of Rubbish and Garbage
Overgrown Lot**

The General Counsel called cause number **22-0115**. Property owner William Thomas, Sr. came forward and requested a 10-day extension to remediate the property. Code Enforcement Officer, Sasha James, concurred with the request and recommended the 10-day extension. 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. Council Member Beard made a motion give the property owner a **10-day extension** to remediate the property, and that an Order be issued for the property 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 remove 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 voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

ROBERT RAYMOND

1110 – 7th Avenue North

CASE NUMBER: 21-0337 Property Maintenance Code Violation

The General Counsel called cause number **21-0337**. Property owner Robert Raymond came forward and requested a 30-day extension to remediate the property. Code Enforcement Officer, Sasha James, concurred with the request and recommended the 10-day extension. 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. Council Member Jones made a motion give the property owner a **30-day extension** to remediate the property, renew the building permit and immediately abate following the 30-day period, and that an Order be issued for the property 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 remove rubbish, personal property and other debris no more than twelve (12) times in a twenty-four (24) month period. Council Member Beard seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

ROBERT L. AND KRISTIE L. JONES

8th Avenue North

CASE NUMBER: 22-0110

Overgrown Lot

The General Counsel called cause number **22-0110**. No one appeared. Code Enforcement Officer Sasha James stated the property has been **remediated** by the owner, and it is her recommendation to enter the proposed Order under Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code, finding that this property was in such a state of uncleanness as to be a menace to the public health and safety of the community. This Order should provide for such re-entry as the Statute allows. 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. Costs are to be assessed as allowed under Section 21-19-11 of the Mississippi Code. Council Member Beard seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

B. Discuss/Approve Reclaiming Our Youth initiative budget and the use of Propst Park Activity Center as a permanent location

Jammie Garrett, COO, provided a proposed budget for the City-sponsored youth program, Reclaiming Our Youth Initiative. She is requesting a budget of \$60,341.00 to establish a Youth Department, and outlined the justifications. The program will consist of a 6-week day program for young people, ages 13 – 17 and expect 50 participants. Individuals in the City and in the Community will be available to teach life skills, financial literacy, Municipal Court, Legal studies and Practices, Civic Education, etc. The evening program will be open for children of all ages. The program anticipates 50 – 100 children will be enrolled. The request is to approve the use of the Activities Center in Propst Park, after some renovations and spelled out in the budget produced by the COO. Asset forth in the budget, the request is that some funds go toward a daytime instructor and an assistant. Council Member Jones made a motion to allocate \$50,000.00 for Reclaiming Our Youth initiative and fund the program from the CARES Act fund, and name the building in memory of the young lady that perished in the Park. Included in the motion is that the City expend \$3,750 of the CARES Act fund, to Building Bridges of Hope Foundation to match, dollar for dollar, contributions of other donors to said foundation with the

expenditure being made so that participants in the program will be fed during the program hours with an estimated total amount of \$7,500. Council Member Beard seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0

C. Discuss/Approve ARPA Incentive Pay

General Counsel Turnage presented a research Memorandum to the Mayor and Council which discussed Treasury's Final Rule regarding ARPA , which is designed for lower income workers in communities with people of color. Counsel Turnage stated has not received an Answer from the AG's office, but from his review, of the Final Rule Premium Pay is legal under ARPA for employees who are not exempt from the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and is allowable for exempt employees if sufficient justification is made for making the Premium Payments. His memo spelled out five different alternative choices for the Mayor and Council. As well, the General Counsel stated that while the Attorney General has not answered his request for an official opinion, payment of incentive pay has been found by the Attorney General to be legal under Mississippi law. As well, the General Counsel stated that because the City was receiving less than \$10M in ARPA funds, the City could elect the standard allowance and use ARPA money for General Government Services and that temporary pay increases could be made to exempt employees under General Government Services and not as Premium Payments. The CFO stated that he recommended option 5 from the memo, which is awarding Premium Pay to each non-exempt employee and a temporary pay increase for exempt employees under General Government Services. Council Member Jones made a motion to approve Option 5 to pay eligible hourly full-time employees \$3,000.00 in one check, eligible EXEMPT employees whose base annual salary does not exceed \$70,000.00 one (1) check totaling \$3,000.00, and give EXEMPT employees whose base annual salary exceeds \$70,000.00 a temporary pay increase to equate to \$3,000.00, and while this will not be considered Premium Pay, on recommendation of the General Counsel that the minutes reflect written justification, that they were required to work during the pandemic at a reduced schedule and reduced salary and lost income as a consequence. Employees will not be required to sign to receive the funds. Council Member Beard seconded the motion.

During discussion, the General Counsel stated that he felt positive about the action, but was not guaranteeing that this was legal under ARPA, as Treasury's Final Rule is over 400 pages and the City did not yet have a favorable AG Opinion, which he felt was important with regard to the incentive nature of the payments.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion except Council Member Greene, who opposed.

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The motion carried 5/1.

INCENTIVE PAY FINAL RULING FOLLOWS:

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MEMORANDUM

FROM: JEFF TURNAGE
TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
RE: ARPA PREMIUM PAY
DATE: June 3, 2022

Dear Mayor Gaskin and Members of the City Council:

The purpose of this memo to give an update on the City's resolution awarding Premium Pay under the American Rescue Plan Act's (ARPA) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF). As you recall, I was concerned that it was illegal under Mississippi law to simply award retroactive payments (also called bonuses or unlawful donations), under the Constitution and laws of the State. I have been advised by Tom Chain of Technical Assistance at State Audit that State law applies to ARPA funds. So, to get around that obstacle, I crafted the Premium Pay Resolution in such a way that the payments were designed as "incentive" prospective payments. It was my opinion that the Resolution as I crafted it, cleared the State hurdle on the granting of incentive payments to government workers. In spite of the fact that incentive payments have been considered legal under Mississippi Law, I advised the Mayor and Council not to make Premium Payments as incentive pay in the absence of obtaining a favorable Attorney General's Opinion. As of the writing of this letter I still do not have a favorable opinion from the Attorney General. Unfortunately, in a recent telephone call to the Opinions Division of the AG's office I was told by Ms. Beebe Garrard, Esq. of the AG's office that the AG will not be giving me an answer one way or the other as to the legalities of granting incentive payments from the SLFRF funds.

Also, I have been studying the ARPA final rule. Some of you may have tried to read parts of the final rule. If so, you know that it is over 400 pages and some parts difficult to understand and it raises more questions than it actually resolves. As well the final rule answered some questions raised by people sending input about the interim final rule¹. But, as you all know from comments I and others who have studied ARPA have made, ARPA was designed to lift up lower-income Americans especially in communities of color. Premium Pay under the final rule from Treasury streamlined options and broadened the share of workers who can receive premium payments to include all workers who are entitled to earn overtime (non-exempt employees). In other words, under the **final rule**, a recipient may show that premium pay is responsive by

¹ The interim final rule, stated that if a recipient (or grantee) used SLFRF funds to provide premium pay to an employee and the pay or grant would increase a worker's total pay above 150 percent of their residing state or county's average annual wage for all occupations, as defined by the BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, whichever is higher, on an annual basis, then the recipient must provide, whether for themselves or on behalf of a grantee, written justification to Treasury detailing how the award responds to eligible workers performing essential work.

merely proving that the eligible worker receiving premium pay is not exempt from the FLSA overtime provisions (e.g. if they are paid hourly and entitled to overtime for hours worked per week over 40, they are not exempt).

This change in the final rule from the interim final rule expanded the number of workers eligible to receive premium pay and does not require recipients to provide written justification to Treasury regarding the workers who are not exempt from the FLSA overtime provisions. According to the final rule, this change made the program easier to administer for recipients. Incorporating this change further simplifies application of the final rule for recipients because Treasury understands that most employers, public and private, are familiar with and are routinely required to apply the FLSA.

Therefore, the final rule provides that premium pay is responsive to eligible workers performing essential work during the public health emergency if each eligible worker who receives premium pay falls into one of three categories:

- (1) the worker's pay is below the wage threshold,
- (2) the worker is not exempt from the FLSA overtime provisions, and
- (3) the recipient has submitted a written justification to Treasury.

Under category 3 above, exempt employees of a government unit are not entitled to receive Premium Pay without satisfactory written justification from the governing authority, which justification will be subject to a Single Audit and an auditor's conclusion as to whether the justification for paying Premium Pay to someone who is not in a low income category complies with ARPA and the final rule.

Today I called Tom Chain, CPA. Mr. Chain is with Technical Assistance at the Office of the Mississippi State Auditor. Mr. Chain was adamant that he would avoid across the board Premium Pay and would certainly avoid granting Premium Pay for workers who are exempt. In fact, he stated that he would not recommend Premium Pay at all. Mr. Chain stated that "incentive payments" are different from salary payments in that incentive payments are not subject to PERS. This means that the payroll department will have a burdensome problem of different payments and tax forms for employees receiving premium payments. Mr. Chain said that in his previous career as a private accountant, he handled payroll for employers and that having two sets of wages with differing withholdings would be an administrative nightmare.

Thus, all employees who are not exempt may receive premium pay without written justification to Treasury but exempt employees may not receive premium pay without it. Of course non-exempt employees are generally going to be your lower wage employees (with some obvious exceptions).

As stated, for those employees who are exempt employees (not entitled to overtime), they may not receive Premium Pay without written justification from the City. If the desire is there to give incentive pay to employees who are exempt from overtime provisions of the FLSA, then the Mayor and Council would have to make written justification to Treasury. One might think the City could easily justify paying exempt employees incentive payments. One idea might be that the City is making incentive payments available to exempt employees because their presence is

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essential to the provision of essential government work and for most of such workers, their compensation was reduced during the early months of the pandemic when their hours and salaries were cut, as well as the justification Columbus City workers are underpaid vis-à-vis other local units of government and the incentive is needed to keep providing essential services to this community of color. With that said, there is no specific guidance on what justification will pass scrutiny under a federal audit. The City will be subject to a "Single Audit" the report of which will be sent to Treasury. Then the question becomes whether the justification for paying workers who were not in the lower paid category was an adequate justification and what is the consequence for failure to adequately justify the payments to workers who were not lower income employees.

An additional idea Mr. Chain offered was simply to raise the hourly rates and/or salaries of the employees, rather than paying under ARPA's Premium Pay category. He stated that the City could elect the standard allowance of revenue loss at below \$10M. As we have discussed before, once this election is made, it may be used for general "government services." Frankly, using ARPA money in this fashion would be easier and much less risky than making across the board incentive payments. The risk is whether the City will be able to continue making the increased wage payments once the ARPA funds run out, but the same issue exists with making two incentive payments as previously stated.

Based upon all this, the Mayor and Council have a decision to make. Here are some of the options:

- (1) Cancel the Premium Payments altogether and use the ARPA funds for some other qualifying purpose;
- (2) Make Premium Payments available only to employees who are not exempt under the FLSA and do not pay Premium Payments to employees who are exempt;
- (3) Make Premium Payments available across the board and make written justification to Treasury as to why higher paid (exempt) employees should get such payments. If you do this, and Treasury finds that the justification was inadequate, then the money may be clawed back, but what is unknown is whether all the Premium Pay made to all employees must be repaid or just the part that was not adequately justified. If this option is chosen, I would suggest each exempt employee sign an agreement that they will refund the payment if it is determined that inadequate justification was made;
- (4) Elect the standard allowance for revenue loss below \$10M and give across the board raises of hourly rates and/or salaries as opposed to incentive payments. Under this option, the bookkeeping and payroll departments will be relieved of a massive headache and no justifications are required for compliance;
- (5) Make Premium (incentive) Payments only to employees who are not exempt under the FLSA and give pay raises for exempt employees using the standard allowance (this might be less risky than option 3, but still comes with the administrative headaches with PERS and non-PERS incentive payments.

CONCLUSION

As stated above, we don't have a favorable opinion from the Attorney General and are not going to receive one. Premium Payments may not be awarded to higher earning exempt employees without the governing authority making written justification, which is subject to audit and rejection. It is unclear what written justification would suffice to uphold the payments. Increasing the pay for some workers while ignoring the needs of other workers might cause irreparable damage to morale. Thus, although the Council passed the resolution approving the incentive pay plan presented, it was contingent upon a favorable opinion from the AG. We did not get that. A simpler and more certain idea is to elect the standard allowance for revenue loss and grant across the board pay increases using ARPA money. If there are other qualifying purposes for ARPA funds that would free up other general fund money, then the final idea would be to use ARPA funds for those qualifying purposes and give raises from other municipal sources, if there are any.

D. Discuss/Approve Juneteenth Holiday

Pat Mitchell, Human Resources Director, read an excerpt from the Mississippi Legislature, House Bill 75, and requested to approve Juneteenth as a Holiday on Monday, June 20, 2022 for the City of Columbus in lieu of taking Columbus Day, which was observed the second Monday in October. Council Member Beard made a motion to approve Juneteenth as a Holiday on Monday, June 20, 2022 for the City of Columbus in lieu of taking Columbus Day, which was observed the second Monday in October. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

E. Discuss/Approve Acceptance of TVA Community Care Fund Grant, sponsored by Columbus Light & Water and TVA, in the amount of \$15,000.00 to enhance Hank Aaron Park

Greg Lewis, Recreation Department Director, came forward and remarked that this is a matching Grant, but Columbus Light & Water and TVA and requested that the Council approve the acceptance of the grant. Council Member Jones made a motion to accept the TVA Community Care Fund Grant, sponsored by Columbus Light & Water and TVA, in the amount of \$15,000.00 to enhance Hank Aaron Park. Council Member Diccio seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

F. Discuss/Approve hiring one (1) CPD Reserve Officer, contingent on successful completion of pre-employment medical exam and drug screen

Council Member Beard made a motion to hire Johannah Owusu as a Reserve Officer in the Police Department, contingent on successful completion of a pre-employment medical exam and drug screen. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

G. Discuss/Approve Taylor Street Speed Hump Request

Kevin Stafford came forward and reported that the Traffic Calming Committee has received a qualifying petition for a traffic calming device along Taylor Street and recommends the installation of one (1) speed hump between Cornelia and Florence Streets and recommends reducing the speed to 25 mph. Council Member Mickens made a motion to approve the request to install one (1) speed hump between Cornelia and Florence Streets and recommends reducing the speed to 25 mph as recommended by NSI. Council Member Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

H. Discuss/Approve Temporary Roof Repairs for Columbus Police Department and Municipal Complex Strip Center

Kevin Stafford requested approval to make temporary Roof Repairs for Columbus Police Department and Municipal Complex Strip Center to prevent additional internal damage to the structures. The cost for the Police Department is \$10,000 - \$12,000 and prices for the Municipal Complex Strip Center are not complete. Council Member Beard made a motion to approve the request to make temporary Roof Repairs for Columbus Police Department and Municipal Complex Strip Center, with cost for the Police Department being \$10,000 - \$12,000. Council member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

I. Discuss/Approve Use of Perpetual Upkeep Funds to Repair Roads in Friendship Cemetery

Council Member Beard made a motion to approve the use of Perpetual Upkeep Funds to Repair Roads in Friendship Cemetery. Council Member Mickens seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

J. Discuss/Approve Critical Equipment/Personnel Needs for Public Works

Casey Bush, Public Works Director, came before the Mayor and Council and discussed the need for heavy equipment, zero-turn lawn mowers and vehicles, estimating the cost to be \$531,723.21. Mr. Bush requested a new Boom Truck, a Backhoe Loader, (3) 60" Zero Turn Mowers, (4) Commercial Backpack Blowers, (6)

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Commercial Weedeaters, and four (4) Crew Cab trucks. Council Member Greene made a motion to table this request until we have a plan in place. The motion did not receive a second.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION:

Council Member Jones made a substitute motion to allocate \$500,000.00 out of the CARES Funds for the purpose of purchasing equipment for the Public Works Department. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

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

The motion carried 4/2.

Mayor Gaskin requested that the COO, CFO, and Public Works Director meet and determine the age of equipment so you will be prepared to phase aging equipment out.

K. Discuss/Approve Audit Engagement Letter from Watkins, Ward and Stafford, PLLC

CFO Jim Brigham came forward and updated the Council on the status of the 2020 Audit and presented the Engagement letter for the 2021 Audit at a cost not to exceed \$54,000.00. Mr. Brigham remarked that he is waiting for a list from the Auditor and recommends that the City accept the Engagement letter for the 2021 Audit, then maybe we can accept RFPs for an Auditing Firm for the 2022 Audit. Mr. Brigham also recommended that the City appoint an Audit Committee, comprised of Finance personnel, elected official and members of the public. Council Member Greene made a motion to accept the Audit Engagement Letter from Watkins, Ward and Stafford, PLLC, not to exceed \$54,000.00. Council Member Mickens seconded the motion. During discussion, Council Member Mickens advised that he would like an oral report from the fee auditor at the next regular meeting.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried.

L. Discuss/Approve Enlargement of Closing Date for Woody's On the Water

General Counsel Turnage requested approval of Enlargement of Closing Date for Woody's On the Water until July 20, 2022. Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the request to extend the Closing Date for Woody's On the Water. Council Member Greene seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

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The motion carried 6/0.

OPEN SESSION:

Council Member Greene made a motion to end the discussion of these matters and return to Open Session. Council Member Dickey seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion carried 6/0.

The COO announced to the general public outside the meeting room that the Council was back in Open Session.

The General Counsel announced that the Mayor and Council went in Executive Session to discuss one (1) personnel matter involving the job performance of an employee in the Police Department and issued the employee a written reprimand and : a Litigation matter and the Council took no action.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

Approved by: _____
Keith Gaskin, Mayor

James "Jim" Brigham
CFO/Secretary-Treasurer/City Clerk