

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF BLYTHEVILLE, ARKANSAS
February 15, 2022 - 5:00 P.M.

The City Council of the City of Blytheville, Arkansas met in regular session at the Ritz Civic Center on February 15, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. Present were Mayor James Sanders, City Clerk Melody Lawson, City Attorney Chris Brown, and the following Council Members: R.L. Jones, John Musgraves, Barbara McAdoo-Brothers, John Mayberry, Matt Perrin, and Vera James.

The invocation was given by Reverend Dwayne Culp.

Mayor Sanders led the pledge of allegiance.

The Mayor asked for the council's wishes on approval of the minutes from the January 18, 2022 regular meeting and the January 21, 2022 special meeting. Jones made the motion, seconded by James to accept the minutes of the January 18, 2022 regular meeting and the January 21, 2022 special meeting as prepared by the City Clerk, vote 6/0.

Councilman Perrin made a motion to amend the agenda – moving item #6 ahead of item #5. Motion died for lack of second.

The Mayor asked if anyone in attendance wished to address the council on agenda items. Mr. Syed Rizvi representing Crooked Lake Solar Park, LLC asked to speak on item #4 *Amending Ordinance 1498, The Zoning Ordinance To Allow For Solar Panels In I-1 To I-2 For Conditional Use Only*. He commented that the company was looking forward to partnering with the City of Blytheville in this project and explained the anticipated start date would be January of 2023 with a completion date of March 2024.

The Mayor called for new business.

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1832 (PERSONNEL HANDBOOK)

Jones offered the Ordinance, discussion held about needing time to review. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to read by title only one time, vote 6/0.

ORDINANCE NO. 1936

AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1622 REGARDING THE DISCHARGING OF FIREARMS WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS

McAdoo-Brothers offered the Ordinance, which was read in full by the City Clerk. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to suspend the rules and read the Ordinance for the second time by title only, vote 6/0. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to suspend the rules and read the Ordinance for the third time by title only, vote 6/0. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to adopt the Ordinance, vote 6/0. Musgraves made the motion, seconded by Jones, to enact the emergency clause, vote 6/0.

ORDINANCE NO. 1937

TO AMEND ZONING ORDINANCES OF A TRACT OF PROPERTY FROM CLASSIFICATION R-4 TO I-1

McAdoo-Brothers offered the Ordinance, which was read in full by the City Clerk. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to suspend the rules and read the Ordinance for the second time by title only, vote 6/0. Jones made the motion, seconded by Mayberry, to suspend the rules and read the Ordinance for the third time by title only, vote 6/0. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to adopt the Ordinance, vote 6/0. Musgraves made the motion, seconded by Jones, to enact the emergency clause, vote 6/0.

ORDINANCE NO. 1938

AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1498, THE ZONING ORDINANCE TO ALLOW FOR SOLAR PANELS IN ZONES I-1 TO I-1 FOR CONDITIONAL USE ONLY

Jones offered the Ordinance, which was read in full by the City Clerk. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to suspend the rules and read the Ordinance for the second time by title only, vote 6/0. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to suspend the rules and read the Ordinance for the third time by title only, vote 6/0. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to adopt the Ordinance, vote 6/0. Musgraves made the motion, seconded by Jones, to enact the emergency clause, vote 6/0.

RESOLUTION NO. 2022:07

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF CERTAIN EQUIPMENT FOR THE BLYTHEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

McAdoo-Brothers offered the Resolution, which was read in full by the City Clerk. Jones made the motion, seconded by James, to adopt the Resolution, the vote was 4/2. Perrin and Mayberry voted no.

RESOLUTION NO. 2022:08

AMENDING THE 2022 BUDGET

Musgraves offered the Resolution, which was read in full by the City Clerk. Discussion was held. Jones made the motion, seconded by Musgraves, to adopt the Resolution, the vote was 4/2. Perrin and Mayberry voted no.

RESOLUTION NO. 2022:09

AUTHORIZING THE SALE/DISPOSITION OF OLD, UNUSED, STORED SEATING UNITS AT THE RITZ CIVIC CENTER

McAdoo-Brothers offered the Resolution, which was read in full by the City Clerk. Musgraves made the motion, seconded by Jones, to adopt the Resolution, the vote was 6/0.

Mayor Sanders gave his state of the city address. He began by congratulating the BHS basketball team on a successful season.

To the Citizens of Blytheville, the City Council Members, our City Clerk and City Attorney.

I always want to acknowledge GOD, from whom all blessings flow. I acknowledge my wife Joyce who keeps me together with her continued support

. To the City of Blytheville Staff that is unwavering everyday making sure we have clean water and sewer, sanitation services, and those who make sure we are fiscally responsible.

Let me first address the city and announce that the State of our city is sound. The last 2 years have been the most challenging of my career. COVID-19 and its affects have turned not only our city, state, and nation but the WORLD upside down. The continued loss of loved ones, the exposures and illnesses throughout our community has completely changed how we do business. It is no longer business as usual, and this has been very stressful for our administration and our employees. But we will get through it together for a better tomorrow. We are not perfect, no one is, but we can work together.

We've had a very productive year, with your help, and the passing of the Public Safety Tax, we were able to complete a \$2.8 million dollar New and Innovative Justice Center and Courtroom. Sky COPS continue to be placed strategically around the city helping to solve and combat crime. Crime Rates are down. We continue to focus on the city by recruiting more officers and this is possible due our ability to offer a more competitive wage.

With the Police and Fire Tax, our Fire Department has purchased more than 3 Fire Trucks and essential apparatuses over the past few years. One of which was in the last fiscal year with a purchase price of over \$400,000.00. We continue to fund a maintenance contract to maintain fire hydrants throughout the city and the generator that supports power to station one in times of outages.

In our Wastewater Department, we have completed a city wide I&I project (smoke-test) at the cost of \$450,000 to get ahead on our city's Inflow and Infiltration System this will reduce any projected fines with ADEQ. A 9-million-dollar Wastewater Treatment Plant protecting our ground water is currently under construction all being funded by revenue bonds.

In our Public Works Department, our latest purchase was a Pro-Patch Truck, that cost the city over \$175,000 to address the city's pothole issues that should make its arrival soon. But I also want you to know that Public Works has over the years replaced a lot of its old, damaged equipment with new equipment. The Elm Street Recovery Project is forecasted to begin this fall although we were denied a \$500,000 TAP grant to assist in the completion of the sidewalks. This 1.2-million-dollar project was budgeted based on Engineer Est. in 2019 and we can expect a 30-40% increase in cost due to inflation and the price of materials however, we are still on target.

In Water Department, we have used our Water Revenue in the purchase and install of Radio Read Meters throughout the city. Also, to address future expansion the water department has installed 1600 feet of 8" Main pipe and 2 fire hydrants along East HWY 18 near the industrial park; An additional 2000 feet of 2" pipe and 5 fire hydrants have been placed on Mississippi Avenue; Water system upgrades have happened on Kentucky and Missouri Streets.

Code Enforcement continues to eradicate blight by tearing down more than 100 houses to date. This increases the property value for those underserved and undervalued neighborhoods and hopefully fosters a new sense of pride in property and community. We are working with several independent companies to bring new housing developments to the city.

Our City Parks are being addressed; we are currently working on upgrades in our parks and recreation facilities. Some of the upgrades that have happened include delineators, crosswalk, and lighting in Walker Park; the roof of the Ritz is underway with a match grant through the Arkansas Historic Preservation Council, a contract has been awarded to Jonesboro Roofing Company and should begin early spring. We are taking a hard look and investing in our Museum, Ball Parks and Golf Course as well.

Let's talk about Finance for a minute, our finance department has addressed the disparity in municipal wages compared to industry pay. We budgeted to bring the city's starting pay to \$12.00 an hour a 25% increase since 2018 when minimum wage was only 8.75. and this increase carried over across departments with pay increases ranging anywhere from 9%-3% making our wages competitive.

When I came into office in 2011, the General Fund and Infrastructure were a combined fund balance and the total across both accounts was \$307, 372.00. Also, the city owed 3.8 million dollars to the IRS and later learned that an estimated 2 million dollars was owed to the Arkansas Department of Finance in back payroll taxes.

Once this was identified our office segregated the general and infrastructure funds so that we could track revenues and expenditures in a more efficient manner. Since that time, we have retired the tax debt and at the end of last year, as of December 31, 2021, our combined balance of general fund and infrastructure was \$4. 1 million dollars. Approximately 2 million dollars of this 4.1 million is designated as Capital Expenditures for 2022.

When I took the oath of office, I promised to lift-up the people that I am duly sworn to serve, and improve the health, wellness, and economic status of workers and our business community.

That promise guided the approved municipal budget that I submitted to the City Council for review and approval in October. I want to thank John Callens, our CFO, and his team for their work. We have kept the city financially sound, and we are operating in the BLACK and that's a huge accomplishment considering we are coming out a pandemic, our population has decreased according to the Census report and our turn back funds are changing.

So, I encourage you that things are looking up. In these days ahead invest in our talented and local diverse businesses. Let's keep these tax dollars circulating.

As you increase your work force hire local.

Dine in our local restaurants and most definitely shop local

We are better together. Thank YOU

There being no further business before the council, Jones made the motion to adjourn, seconded by James. The motion carried unanimously, and the mayor declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melody Lawson, Clerk/Treas