

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF BLYTHEVILLE, ARKANSAS
May 19, 2020 – 5:00 P.M.**

In accordance with Governor Asa Hutchinson's Executive Order 20-03 restricting gatherings to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Blytheville City Council held its second virtual Council meeting at 5:00 p.m. May 19, 2020. Mayor James W. Sanders conducted the meeting from City Hall via the teleconferencing app, Zoom. Joining in remotely were: City Clerk Connie Mosley-Brents, City Attorney Chris Brown and Council Members Barbara McAdoo-Brothers, Vera James, R. L. Jones, John Mayberry, John Musgraves and Matt Perrin. The press was represented by Jonet' Washington.

The invocation was given by Council Member James.

Mayor Sanders led the pledge of allegiance.

Mayor Sanders asked for the Council's wishes for approval of the minutes from the April 21, 2020 regular meeting. Jones moved, Musgraves second, and by consent of all members (6/0), the minutes of the April 21, 2020 regular meeting were approved, accepted and filed as prepared by the City Clerk.

There were no reports from committees due to the cancellation of May committee meetings.

There was no old or new business to be conducted.

Mayor Sanders gave a brief update on various departments within the city, starting with the Police Department. They have 32 officers, and 7 openings. They are looking to hire new officers and applications are being taken. Court attempted to start this past Monday, however with the COVID-19 situation Judge Langston decided they actually weren't prepared. Currently they are working on a system she can be comfortable with in order to get court up and going again. The Justice Center is still on going. A water leak was discovered while digging inside the building. The necessary steps were taken to correct this, and now everything is going as planned. The original estimated completion date was set for September or October, but now that will be pushed to December. The Fire Department has one fireman that is self-quarantined. He incurred third party exposure, not direct exposure. Fire Chief Mike Carney reported this morning that the second party involved tested negative, so our fireman should be able to return to work. Both the Police and Fire Department have sufficient PPE's and are grateful to Nucor, who stepped up again and provided additional masks. Grant paperwork has been filed with the Office of Emergency Management and the Department of Justice, we are awaiting either funding or a response from them. The street work on Highland Street and Ruddle Road has been completed. We encountered the water line situation at the corner of Ruddle and Moultrie, which could have been a disaster, however the waterworks, wastewater, and public works departments all worked together in resolving the issue. In the Sanitation Department, Public Works Director Mark Key says he has seen a remarkable increase in the amount of

garbage and trash due to people being at home that would normally be at work. While no numbers are yet available on the exact increase, he will be getting information together to present at a later date. The Parks and Recreation Department is slowly reopening in accordance to Gov. Hutchinson's guidelines. There is talk about opening public swimming pools. A plan must be submitted and certified by the AR Department of Health before any opening of a public pool. If any Council Member has a concern of opening the pool, the Mayor urged them to contact him. The Code Enforcement Department has torn down around 10 houses this year. Although running behind, the effort is still on going, and the old "ice house" building" has been torn down. The next scheduled structure to be demolished is 515 Delmar. The City is working with Ms. Priscilla Johnson of the MCEOC for funding to assist citizens with their water bills. No water is being turned off.

Finance Director John Callens spoke briefly about the financial affairs of the City. He stated Mrs. Logan is overseeing three grants, an AFGS grant for reimbursement of \$50,247.00 of expenses, another grant through the AR Municipal League for \$50,839.00 and a third grant, that we don't have an amount on at this time. These grants, which are helpful, are for unexpected COVID-19 expenses. These will not help us in our revenue shortfall. In areas where we are starting to see shortages are, for example, fines and forfeitures for March and April, those collections are down 32.7%. The collections at the Water Department which includes water, sanitation and sewer is down 6% for the same time frame, March and April. In other areas we don't have data in yet. However, in talking with the AR Municipal League, they say we could possibly see a 20% decrease in our turnback money over the next 12 months. If that holds true, that could amount to \$200,000.00 to \$220,000.00. Another major area of unknown is the sales tax collection. The last payment received was for the month of February. In coming months, we'll have a better idea since the amount received in May is actually for March, and the amount received in June is for April. In order to offset some of the shortfalls, we have limited our capital expenditures. Callens stated that he and the Mayor have talked with all department heads making them aware of the shortfalls and stressed they should limit their expenditures. They've had many conversations with the Arkansas Municipal League dealing with this situation and he and the Mayor are hoping that additional funding will be coming. In addition, they've had talks with government officials trying to put together a bill that will assist in the funding of lost revenues for municipalities and counties. However, at present, no legislation has been passed that would assist municipalities with such.

McAdoo-Brothers expressed her concern about the illegal use of dirt bikes on city streets, vehicles racing and noise violations. She's received numerous calls regarding this from all wards of the city. Jones expressed his concerns about the same issues stated by McAdoo-Brothers, adding that he gets complaints as well.

There being no further business before the Council, McAdoo-Brothers made a motion to adjourn, Jones second. The motion carried unanimously; the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Connie Mosley-Brents, Clerk/Treas