CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – December 19, 2023

The regularly scheduled monthly session of the Mulberry City Council convened on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, at precisely 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the City Council Center, located at 606 Church Avenue, Mulberry.

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jimmy Moore, Ward 3 Position 2

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

Wilma Peevy, Ward 3 Position 1

Stacy Muntz, Ward 1 Position 2

Sheila Trent, Ward 1 Position 1

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Kimberly Bruce, Ward 2 Position 2

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Executive Assistant to the Mayor

Sarah Parkinson

Shannon Gregory, Police Chief

Mandy Oestreich

Dwayne Fields, Public Works Director

Scott Oestreich

Jeff Brown, Fire Chief

Kay Baxter

Darren Fields, Water Superintendent

Linda Wilson

Ken Wilson

Rinda Baker

Sherry Hesson

Eric Pierce

Sadat Rice

Laura Bryant

Derrick Bryant

Emily Bryant

Tammy Watts, Branch Director of Mulberry Public Library

Greta Bugg

Justin Anthony

Tom Bugg

Karen Rhodes, Member Planning Commission

Andy Dye

Connie Mason

Joseph S. Swad

Eli Clardy

Nancy Sanders

Jose Aguirre

Lena Pinkerton

In the interest of maintaining accurate and comprehensive records, it is noted that two attendees provided signatures that were not decipherable. Consequently, for the purposes of these minutes, they will be designated as 'Unknown Attendee 1' and 'Unknown Attendee 2' respectively.

Call to Order

Mayor Baxter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., leading the gathering in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Executive Assistant to the Mayor, Steve Hurley, conducted the roll call, confirming the presence of a quorum.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes

Council Member Jimmy Moore moved to approve the Consent Agenda and the minutes from the previous month, seconded by Council Member Sheila Trent. The motion passed unanimously among the council members present.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Police Department Report – Chief Shannon Gregory:

- The department responded to 135 calls, conducted sixty-three traffic stops, issued nine citations, and made five arrests (four misdemeanors, one felony).
- 410 business checks performed.
- Announced that the Shop With A Cop event was held at Wal-Mart in Ozark on 12/16. 163 children had signed up. Three of the children had moved out of state and the remaining 160 children were able to shop with $100.00 each to spend.
- The Police Department will be giving 60 Turkey Dinners on 12/21 from noon to five pm to the families who signed up. The Police Chief made sure and gave thanks to the Mulberry Lions Club for covering a large portion of the food giveaway with their donation to Christmas with a Badge. Thanks also go to Cargill for donating the Turkeys for the event.

Fire Department Report – Fire Chief Jeff Brown:

- Addressed eighteen calls: two grass fires, fourteen medical calls, one vehicle fire, and one cancelled call.
- Recognition of Linda Smith as First Responder of the Year and promotion to lieutenant.
- The Christmas Parade was held at night for the first time and was a huge success. The parade lasted over forty minutes and had a lot of floats, cars, wreckers, Fire and Police vehicles.

Public Works Department Report – Wastewater Technician Alex Walker:

- Reported seventeen service calls were completed, one of which was a sewer service call.
- Mr. Walker reported that a valve had broken on Carter Avenue and the Public Works Department is re-routing lines to make the repair. He noted that the charts on file do not show accurately what is in the ground. The charts show the as planned locations not the as laid locations. Discussion ensued.

MULBERRY PUBLIC LIBRARY REPORT – Branch Director Tammy Watts

- Patrons checked out 1,113 books and checked in 914 books.
- The library recorded 1,528 visits.
- Program attendance reached 133, and 195 participating in passive programs.
- Computer usage was recorded at 58 people.
- Wi-Fi usage was utilized by 856 people.
- Discussion ensued.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Appeal to City Council on Variance to Zoning Map Ordinance No. 142**
  - Mayor Baxter led the discussion on the annexation of property. Steve Hurley read a memo from Jim Von Tungeln regarding the Planning Commission's responsibilities. Following the discussion, Council Member Stacy Muntz moved, seconded by Jimmy Moore, to return the matter to the Planning Commission for further study. The motion was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Justin Anthony with Hubbs and Whitehead CPA's**
  - Mr. Anthony discussed the findings from the City of Mulberry Water, Sewer, and Sanitation Fund Audited Financial Statements for the year ending 2022.
  - A Clean Opinion was issued for 2022 meaning there were no material misstatements or findings in the financial statements.
- **Sarah Parkinson with the American Legion**
  - Mrs. Parkinson stated that the American Legion in Mulberry has been closed because costs to run the chapter exceeded the income.
  - The American Legion sold the American Legion Building and made donations to the City from the proceeds. The following checks were presented to the City of Mulberry by the American Legion.
    i. A check was given to the City of Mulberry for $23,899.07 for the New Cemetery Pavilion.
    ii. A check was given to the Police Department for $7,963.02.

iii. A check was given to the Mulberry Fire Department for $7,963.02.
iv. A check was given to the Parks Department for $7,963.02.

- **Steve Hurley presented proposed personnel handbook amendments.**
  - Steve Hurley read proposed amendments to Section 4.4.1 of the personnel handbook regarding the procedure for employees to report their hours worked, and Section 4.4.3 of the personnel handbook changing the employee pay cycle from semi-monthly to bi-weekly.
  - Council Member Bobby Tweedy motioned to approve the personnel handbook amendments as presented. Council Member Sheila Trent seconded the motion.
  - There was no discussion.
  - The vote was called. All present council members voted in favor of the resolution.

- **ORDINANCE 2023-09 AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH CEMETERY PLOT PRICES FOR THE CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS, FOR THE MULBERRY NEW CEMETERY, AND TO SET FEES FOR OPENING AND CLOSING GRAVES ON WEEKDAYS AND WEEKENDS; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

  - Discussion ensued.

  - Council Member Stacy Muntz motioned to have the suspend the rules and have the ordinance read for the second and third times by title only. Jimmy Moore seconded the motion. There was no discussion and all present members voted yes.

  - Jimmy Moore motioned to approve the ordinance. Stacy Muntz seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and all present council members voted in favor of the resolution.

  - Bobby Tweedy motioned to accept the emergency clause. Wilma Peavy seconded the motion. Stacy Muntz voted not to accept the emergency clause, but all other present council members voted yes.

- **RESOLUTION NO. 2023-12 A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ADOPTION OF A BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS, FOR THE TWELVE (12) MONTHS BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024, AND ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2024.**

  - Jimmy Moore motioned to approve the ordinance. Sheila Trent seconded the motion.

  - There was no discussion.

  - All present council members voted yes.

MAYOR'S REPORT AND PUBLIC COMMENT

- **Public Comment**
  - Candidates Rinda Baker, Lena Pinkerton, and Eli Clardy spoke about their respective candidacies.

- **Council Comment:**

  - Jimmy Moore inquired about enforcement procedures for clean-up orders and the status of the clean-up of a property on Hamtown Road, addressed by Mayor Baxter and Chief Shannon Gregory.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss Stacy Muntz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jimmy Moore seconded the motion. All present members voted yes.

This meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m. The next scheduled City Council meeting will be on January 16, 2024.

Minutes recorded by: Steve Hurley

APPROVED: _____

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

ATTEST: Carla Dickerson

Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer