CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – December 17, 2024

The regularly scheduled monthly session of the Mulberry City Council convened on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, 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:

Sheila Trent, Ward 1 Position 1

Stacy Muntz, Ward 1 Position 2

Kimberly Bruce, Ward 2 Position 2

Jimmy Moore, Ward 3 Position 2

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

Wilma Peevy, Ward 1 Position 1

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Assistant to the Mayor

Courtney Polk

Shannon Gregory, Police Chief

Brad Ridenour

Jason Sumpter, Assistant Fire Chief

Sadat Rice

Alex Walker, Public Works Director

Cathy Adams

Tammy Watts, Director Ralph D. Graff Library of Mulberry

Kay Baxter

Scott Oestreich

Seth Fisher

Ronnie Adams

Mandy Oestreich

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:

Steve Hurley, Executive Assistant to the Mayor, called the roll:

- Present: Kimberly Bruce, Jimmy Moore, Stacy Muntz, Sheila Trent
- Absent: Wilma Peavy and Bobby Tweedy
- A quorum was declared.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes

The council reviewed the minutes from the November Regular meeting and the November Financial Statements.

- Motion to approve: Jimmy Moore
- Seconded by: Sheila Trent
- Vote: Unanimously approved.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Police Department Report – Police Chief Shannon Gregory:

- Police Chief Shannon Gregory reported 124 calls, ninety-one traffic stops, nineteen citations, three arrests (three misdemeanors), and 477 business checks for November.
- Special Events:
  - Christmas with a Badge: 115 children participated, down from 165 in the previous year.
  - Turkey dinners: sixty full turkey dinners, including turkeys donated from Cargill, will be distributed to local families at noon on Friday the 20th at the Senior Center.
  - Chief Gregory noted the department's success in managing events with fewer resources and expressed gratitude for council support.

Fire Department Report – Assistant Fire Chief Jason Sumpter:

- Assistant Fire Chief Jason Sumpter presented the November activity report:
- Nine calls, two grass fires, five medical calls and two motor vehicle accidents.

Public Works Department Report – Public Works Director Alex Walker:

- Fifteen service orders completed.
- Eighty-two meter readings.
- Eight water shutoffs.
- Approximately twenty hours of hydrant flushing completed.
- Recycling center had eighty-five visitors in November.
- One water leak repaired.

- Updates were provided on the completion of paving projects on 4th and 8th Streets with Pavecon using innovative methods to recycle existing road materials, leaving a durable base covered with asphalt.

Ralph D. Graff Library of Mulberry Report – Director Tammy Watts:

Library Director Tammy Watts shared activity data for the Ralph D. Graff Library for November:

- **November Attendance:** 1,869 visitors
- **Programs held:** Twenty, with 189 attendees
- **Passive program participation:** 246 attendees
- **Books checked out:** 1,031
- **Books checked in:** 876
- **Computer usage:** fifty-three sessions
- **Wi-Fi sessions:** 901 Wi-Fi users

Highlights:

- Participation in the Mr. Rogers Sweater Drive resulted in forty-five coats and sweaters distributed locally.
- A new "Bingo for Books" program and a patriotic read-a-thon were successful additions to community offerings.

Tammy Watts expressed gratitude for council support and responded to questions about potential library expansion challenges.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Resolution 2024-24**

Authorizing the Mayor to execute an agreement with the Arkansas Department of Transportation for the Waterline Relocation Project.

- **Motion by:** Jimmy Moore
- **Second by:** Sheila Trent
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

- **Discussion: Flower Shop Lease or Sale**

Mayor Baxter provided an update on the city-owned former flower shop building. He explained that the building's cooler is integrated into the structure and cannot be easily removed. He

recommended the Council consider retaining the property for potential library expansion or leasing it to a local business.

Key points of discussion:

- **Stacy Muntz:** Supported retaining the property for potential library expansion.
- **Suggestions:** Explore leasing opportunities for businesses compatible with a flower shop setup.
- **Council Consensus:** Agreed to table the matter and allow the Mayor to explore leasing opportunities, with no formal action required at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2024-21:

Seeking a grant from the Arkansas Department of Game and Fish Commission to build an ADA-accessible fishing pier at TJ House Reservoir.

- **Motion by:** Stacy Muntz
- **Second by:** Kimberly Bruce
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Resolution 2024-22:

Adopting the City of Mulberry's 2025 Budget.

- **Motion by:** Jimmy Moore
- **Second by:** Sheila Trent
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

Resolution 2024-23:

Authorizing the sale of a 2019 Dodge Ram 1500 truck to a neighboring law enforcement agency at fair market value.

- **Motion by:** Kimberly Bruce
- **Second by:** Stacy Muntz
- **Vote:** Unanimously approved.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Trendsetter Awards

Mayor Baxter announced that Mulberry was a **2024 Trendsetter City Award winner** in the **Technology/Security category** for its cloud-based systems migration. This recognition highlighted the city's technological advancements, including cybersecurity improvements and increased resilience. The city also received **honorable mention in Tourism Development/Creative Culture** for the solar-lit disc golf course, the first of its kind in Arkansas.

Grant Award by Officer Thell Riddle

The Mayor praised Officer Thell Riddle for securing a **$75,000 grant** for the police department. The funds will cover non-lethal equipment, a new vehicle, and accessories, providing significant support for public safety.

Pickleball Court Update

The city received a **$9,453.71 grant** to install solar lights and wind screens at the pickleball courts. The project is progressing, and the equipment has been ordered.

Fire Chief Replacement

The Mayor announced that Fire Chief Jeff Brown is retiring on December 30, 2024. Applications for the position have been received, and interviews are underway. The Mayor anticipates appointing a new chief by early January 2025.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Mayor recognized departing council members for their dedicated service to the City of Mulberry. Each received a certificate and a personalized plaque as tokens of appreciation. The council members reflected on their time serving the city, expressing gratitude, and sharing heartfelt comments about their experiences.

ADJOURNMENT

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

This meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m. The next scheduled City Council meeting will be on January 21, 2025.

Minutes written by: Steve Hurley

APPROVED: _____
Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

ATTEST: _____
Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer