CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – April 15, 2025

The scheduled meeting of the Mulberry City Council convened on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 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:

Seth Fisher, Ward 1 Position 1	Ronnie Adams, Ward 1 Position 2
	Kimberly Bruce, Ward 2 Position 2
Damien Sadat Rice, Ward 3 Position 1	Jeff Marvin, Ward 3 Position 2

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Assistant to the Mayor	Cathy Adams
Shannon Gregory, Police Chief	Kay Baxter
Alex Walker, Public Works Director	Larry Flynn
Darren Fields, Water Plant Superintendent	Larry Hart
Assistant Fire Chief Jason Sumpter, Fire Department	Pam Jones
Scott Oestreich	Mandy Oestreich
James Cletcher	Marie Crandell-Brown

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: Ronnie Adams, Kimberly Bruce, Seth Fisher, Jeff Marvin, Sadat Rice
- Absent: Bobby Tweedy
- A quorum was declared.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes

The consent agenda included the approval of minutes from the March regular meeting and financial statements.

- **Motion to approve:** Kimberly Bruce
- **Second:** Ronnie Adams
- **Vote:** Unanimous approval

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Police Department Report – Police Chief Shannon Gregory:

- 121 calls for service
- Forty-Four traffic stops
- Seven citations issued
- 342 building checks
- Chief Gregory reported that Officer Jared Entrekin will be graduating from the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy on Thursday and will be on his own by the first of next month. The department has been operating with minimal staffing with only two officers, receiving occasional assistance from Billy Mongold from the Ozark Police Department.

Fire Department Report – Assistant Fire Chief Jason Sumpter:

- Fourteen total calls in March.
  - Seven Medical Calls
  - One vehicle accident with injuries
  - Four grass fires
  - One vehicle fire
  - One gas leak investigation
- Assistant Chief Sumpter reported the new brush truck has been delivered, decaled, and emergency equipment installed. Only the skid unit and equipment need to be installed before it is ready for service. This is the first brand new brush truck for the department since 1999.

Public Works Department Report – Public Works Director Alex Walker:

- Twenty-one service calls
- 161 manual meter readings
- Twenty-nine-meter change-outs
- Seventeen shutoffs
- Ninety-nine visitors to the Recycle Center
- Discussion on street paving, drainage, and sewer concerns.
- One water leak
- Council Member Rice noted his appreciation that the sewer cleanouts on Carter Street are no longer overflowing.
- Director Walker confirmed he is collaborating with engineers on a potential grant for a sewer line extension from Heard Street to Carter Street.

Library – Director Tammy Watts

- 2,190 visitors in March
- Thirty-seven programs with 495 in attendance
- 450 books checked out.
- 814 books checked in.
- 129 computer users
- 797 Wi-Fi users
- Director Watts reported various activities during March, including story time where children decorated cookies and sang songs.
- The library stayed busy during spring break with activities including pipe cleaner flower crafts.
- Several donations were received for the summer reading program.

OLD BUSINESS

- **None**

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2025-11 Transportation Alternative Program Funds

• Steve Hurley read Resolution 2025-11, expressing the willingness of the City of Mulberry to utilize federal aid transportation alternative program funds for a sidewalk project along Highway 64.

• Mayor Baxter explained the project would construct a sidewalk from the Senior Center to the property line of the new Dollar General Market. The total cost would be $131,970 for construction, with the grant covering 80% ($105,576) and the city responsible for 20%

($26,394). Engineering fees of $33,720 would not be covered by the grant, bringing the total city cost to $60,114.

- Financial Director Melissa Sampson indicated funds would come from the sales tax that is designated for capital improvement and street projects, with a current balance of $379,414.14 in that account.
- **Motion to approve:** Jeff Marvin
- **Second:** Seth Fisher
- **Vote:** Unanimous approval (5-0)

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Baxter provided the following updates and announcements:

- Edamame Festival Update: Larry Hart from Friends of Mulberry provided details about the upcoming Edamame Festival on April 26-27. Events will include a rugged race, disc golf, archery, pickleball, cornhole, and activities for children. Helicopter rides will be offered near Shelter Insurance. Trophy awards are being prepared for all events.
- Industrial Park Drive Project: Work has begun with equipment moving in.
- Dollar General Market: Construction is progressing well and appears to be on track for their projected three-month completion timeline.
- Youth Shelter: Opening is expected during the summer, as funding for current students remains with their current school district until the end of this school year.
- Water Treatment Plant Construction: Water Superintendent Darren Fields reported considerable progress on the water treatment plant upgrades. The three new filters have been formed and poured, and crews are currently working on the new clarifier base. The splitter box for both clarifiers is being prepared. Fields noted that Crossland Heavy Construction is proving to be an excellent contractor for this project.
- Sewer Line Extension: Engineers completed topographical work last week for the sewer line extension to Workman's property from Marvin Elementary.
- Little Mulberry Bridge: OG&E is making satisfactory progress on relocating lines, after which the highway department will manage bidding for the city's water line relocation.
- New Businesses: The laundromat on Main Street is showing visible progress, and the Wildflower Cafe is currently serving donation-based meals while awaiting final Health Department approval.
- Property Condemnations: The city attorney is working on legal procedures for several condemned properties that need to be demolished, including properties on East Seventh Street, Heard Street, Main Street, and at 705 Church Avenue.
- City-Owned Properties: The property at 104 North Main Street has a down payment but is still addressing title issues. A property on Fourth Street also has a buyer waiting for title clearance.
- Infrastructure Projects: Plans are progressing to extend the water line from Ninth Street to Second Street and from Alma Avenue to Spring Street to address needed replacements. Sewer repairs are planned for the Carter Street area, requiring the removal of trees that are impacting the sewer line. Crews continue using smoke testing to identify infiltration issues.

- City Cleanup: Council person Bruce reported that the spring cleanup had lower volunteer participation than usual with about thirteen participants total, including city workers. The next cleanup is planned for October.
- Recreation Facilities: Mayor Baxter noted numerous positive comments about the baseball and softball fields.
- Advertising and Marketing: Councilman Rice presented thoughts on the importance of marketing and advertising city parks and facilities to increase awareness and usage.

- **Public Comment Period:**
    - No residents had signed up to speak at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss Jeff Marvin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seth Fisher seconded the motion. All present members voted yes.

This meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m. The next regular scheduled City Council meeting will be on May 20, 2025.

Minutes written by: Steve Hurley

APPROVED: _____
Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

ATTEST: _____
Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer