CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – November 18, 2025

The scheduled meeting of the Mulberry City Council convened at 7:00 p.m. at the City Council Center, 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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

Jeff Marvin, Ward 3 Postiion 2

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Executive Assistant to the Mayor	Carla Dickerson, Recorder/Treasurer
Shannon Gregory, Police Chief	Darren Fields, Water Plant Superintendent
Jason Sumpter, Assistant Fire Chief	Channon Phipps
Kay Baxter	Mandy Oestreich
Linda Garvin	Cathy Adams
Sheila Pannell	Larry Hart
Misty Bryant	Chad Bryant
Channon Phipps	Elaine Hankins
Jeremy Shores, Hawkins-Weir Engineers, Inc	Isaiah Fields
Jason Sumpter	Marie Crandell-Brown
Janice Justice	Suzanne Cunningham

Vickie Berens | Martha Moore

Call to Order

Mayor Gary D. Baxter called the Council Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., led in prayer, and followed with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

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

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

Jeff Marvin, Ward 3 Postiion 2

With four out of six Council Members present, a quorum was established.

Consent Agenda

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

- **Motion to approve:** Seth Fisher
- **Second:** Kimberly Bruce
- **Vote:** Unanimous - Motion Passed.

Departmental Reports

Police Department – Police Chief Shannon Gregory

- 117 total calls for October

- 53 traffic stops; 9 citations
- 10 arrests (1 felony; 9 misdemeanors)
- 17 cleanup orders
- 479 business checks

Chief Gregory reported preparations for the annual Christmas with a Badge chili supper and pie auction. He shared the history of the program's growth from $5 in the account in 2013 to now serving over 100 children annually. Volunteers continue to be a vital part of the program.

Fire Department – Assistant Fire Chief Jason Sumpter

- 21 total calls in October
    - 1 vehicle fire
    - 13 medical calls
    - 2 vehicle accidents
    - 1 carbon monoxide alarm
    - 2 lift assists
    - 1 canceled call

Assistant Chief Sumpter reported on annual fundraisers and community outreach:

- Mike Gray Memorial Chili Dinner & Pie Auction (March)
- Annual July Fireworks Festival & Car Show (largest fundraiser)
- Fire Safety Week programs at Mulberry Elementary
- Booze Cruise & Main Street Halloween
- Annual Christmas Parade (evening format has been highly successful)

Public Works – Director Alex Walker

October activities included:

- 30 service calls
- 83 manually read meters
- 12 meter change-outs
- 13 shut-offs
- 104 recycling participants
- 3 water leaks

Updates continue regarding Alma Avenue ditch work and mowing. Additional questions regarding Industrial Park Road were deferred to the Mayor's Comments.

Library - Report by Channon Phipps

October activity summary:

- 2,229 patron visits
- 36 programs, 621 attendees
- 822 books checked out
- 709 checked in
- Computer usage: 31 sessions
- Wi-Fi usage: 11,169 connections

Highlights included:

- Steve Hurley's book launch
- Pumpkin decorating contest

- Dutch oven cooking class
- Halloween program with games and costume contest
- Growth in chair exercises and string lessons

Cemetery Committee – Ronnie Adams

- Concrete footings for the new structure have been completed.
- Benches have arrived; several remain available to sponsor with memorial plaques.
- Final construction scheduling is pending from the vendor.

Old Business

None

New Business

Water Treatment Plant – SCADA System Emergency Procurement

Jeremy Shores of Hawkins-Weir Engineering presented an urgent update on the failing PLC system at the Water Treatment Plant, which has locked up three times in recent weeks.

Failure would result in:

- Loss of automated plant operations
- Loss of visibility to tank levels and valve functions
- Full manual operation required

Requested pre-purchase of essential SCADA equipment totaling $65,000, to be paid temporarily from Water Department funds and reimbursed by the upcoming bond/loan closing.

Motion: Seth Fisher
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Unanimous – Motion Passed.

Resolution 2025-19 – Sale of City Property

Council approved the final resolution authorizing sale of Lots 8, 9, and 10, Block 1, Park Addition, to Walter Irrigation, Inc., for $2,700.

Motion: Ronnie Adams
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Unanimous – Motion Passed.

ENGINEERING & PROJECT UPDATES – Hawkins-Weir Engineering

Jeremy Shores provided detailed updates:

Water Treatment Plant Expansion

- Crosland Construction scheduled to complete filter/clarifier work by April 1, 2026.
- Preload has erected new Clearwell tank walls; water-tightness testing and tie-ins expected early 2026.

Highway 64 Water Line Relocation

- Project is complete; passed all pressure and bacteriological tests.
- Recent groundwater intrusion near the site was investigated and confirmed **not** to be a system leak.

Additional Projects

- Hwy 215/Main Street sewer extension: plans submitted to ADH.
- Alma Avenue water line cost estimate delivered to city.
- East 5th Street sewer rehabilitation survey scheduled for November 24.
- Highway 64 sidewalk project survey also scheduled for November 24.

COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

A. Mulberry Lodge – Misty & Chad Bryant

Presentation on reopening the facility as a Community Support Systems Provider (CSSP), not a a Residential Care Facility (RCF).
Highlights:

- Maximum 16 residents
- Mandatory 35 hours per week of therapy, life skills, and social skills training
- On-site clinical director; medical director on call
- Community integration encouraged
- Estimated opening: late December or early January

B. Mulberry Emergency Youth Shelter – Janice Justice

Updates included:

- New building completed; open house held October 8
- Serving youth ages 10–17; education provided on-site by MVPD School District
- Capacity: 16 beds; average stay 19–20 days
- Awaiting completion of alarm system adjustments before accepting new referrals
- Matching grant goal: $191,000 remaining
- Seeking generator funding ($54,000 estimate)

C. Mulberry Food Pantry – Suzy Ferguson

A comprehensive report highlighting:

- Service to Mulberry, Dyer, Alma, Mountainburg, Locke, and Fern
- Monday Meals & Library Thrills program serving ~294 children since August
- New diaper and wipes support initiative

- November SNAP-related surge resulted in serving 272 families (~1,225 individuals)
- Extraordinary volunteer and community involvement

D. Mulberry Senior Center – Elaine Hankins & Suzanne Cunningham

Key points:

- 13,624 meals served year-to-date despite funding cuts
- Home-delivered meals now limited to one hot meal plus frozen meals
- Funding shortages have resulted in waiting lists for the first time in 30 years
- Upcoming fundraisers:
    - Dec 5 – Karaoke Night Fundraiser
    - Dec 7 – Sunday Dinner Fundraiser
- Centers awaiting federal funding release; vehicle grant expected in 2026

E. Creative Arts Center – Martha Moore

- New nonprofit arts center located at 306 N. Main
- Offers pottery, ceramics, kilns, wheels, classes, and community events
- Working to integrate with local schools and arts programs
- Expanding through grants and partnerships; seeking community involvement

MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Mayor Baxter emphasized:

- Pride in the positive work of local organizations
- Importance of promoting Mulberry positively and correcting misinformation
- Industrial Park Road project will resume immediately after Thanksgiving, beginning with east side prep and rework of previous concrete section
- Encouraging news regarding potential 55+ senior housing development

- Continued progress with industrial park recruitment
- Mulberry's upcoming role in America 250 celebrations

COUNCIL MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Rice reported:

- First Cars & Coffee event at Dairy Dip with 29 cars and 5 motorcycles

Citizens Signed Up To Speak

None

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Seth Fisher made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Damien Sadat Rice. Vote: Unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m. The next City Council meeting will be on December 16, 2025.

Carla Dickerson

Carla Dickerson, Recorder/Treasurer

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor