CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – January 20, 2026

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:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Executive Assistant to the Mayor
Carla Dickerson, Recorder/Treasurer
Shannon Gregory, Police Chief
Alex Walker, Public Works Director
Tammy Watts, Branch Director of the Ralph D. Graf Library of Mulberry
Darren Fields, Water Treatment Plant Superintendent
Jason Sumpter, Fire Chief
Kay Baxter
Brian Bowerman
Mandy Oestreich
Zachary Miller
Cathy Adams
Lisa Verity
Kevin Wilson
Laci Tolleson
Adam Tolleson
Mandy Oestreich
Scott Oestreich
Slade Johnson
Jason Sumpter

Call to Order

Mayor Baxter called the Mulberry City Council to order at 7:00 p.m. A prayer was offered and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call

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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ronnie Adams, Ward 1 Position 2

Kimberly Bruce, Ward 2 Position 2

Seth Fisher, Ward 1 Position 1

Jeff Marvin, Ward 3 Position 2

Damien Sadat Rice, Ward 3 Position 1

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

With 5 out of 6 Council Members present, a quorum was established.

Consent Agenda

Approval of the December regular minutes and December financial statements.
Motion: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Approved unanimously (Seth Fisher, Sadat Rice, Jeff Marvin, Kimberly Bruce, Ronnie Adams all voted yes)

Departmental Reports

Police Department – Police Chief Shannon Gregory

- 119 calls for service in December 2025
- 92 traffic stops
- Six citations issued
- One felony arrest; three misdemeanor arrests
- 321 business checks conducted
- Christmas with a Badge event provided assistance to approximately 100 children; 50 full turkey dinners were given to families (mostly Christmas with a Badge participants); event was successful, though more costly this year due to turkey purchases instead of donations

Fire Department – Fire Chief Jason Sumpter

- 17 calls for the month: five fires (three grass, two structure), nine medical calls, one power line down, two public service calls (two lift assists)
- All fire trucks are operational
- Upcoming events: Chili supper and pie auction on March 15 at Senior Center from 11 AM to 2 PM; Easter egg hunt co-sponsored on March 21 at the fairgrounds during the craft show
- All fire trucks are up and running
- Fundraising appeal for pies for the auction

Public Works – Director Alex Walker

- 19 service calls completed in December
- 71 meters read; 3 meter change outs
- 19 water shut-offs conducted
- 65 individuals utilized the recycling center
- 6 water leaks addressed in December, totaling 29 for the year
- Street patching projects are delayed until warmer weather and asphalt plant reopening
- Current investigation into a possible water leak on First Street; upcoming patching and repairs noted on several streets

Library – Library Director Tammy Watts

- 1915 visits in December
- 32 programs held with 377 in attendance
- 237 attendees in passive programs
- 638 books checked out; 623 checked in
- 29 computer uses; 776 Wi-Fi sessions
- December events included: Homeschool exchange, author visit with Steve Hurley, Cookies and Cocoa with Santa, candle making, 'Library Thrills' reindeer food program, Monday meal/free library string lessons/craftivity programming every Monday, fiber arts with Miss Jasmine
- 32 programs, 377 in attendance; 1915 library visits; 237 passive program participants
- 638 items checked out, 623 checked in
- 29 computer users; 776 Wi-Fi sessions
- Expressed gratitude on behalf of staff

Additional Reports

- Cemetery Committee: Structure erected at the cemetery with concrete pending due to weather; visible progress made, completion expected by warmer months

Old Business

None

New Business

Vacant Council Member Seat Appointment

- Councilmember Bobby Tweedy passed away January 2, 2026, creating a vacancy.
- Per Ark. Code 14-44-104 and 14-42-103, council may appoint or call for an election to fill the seat through December 2026 (unexpired term).
- Cost estimate for a special election would be approximately $10,000; appointment is at council discretion.
- Two resumes were received: Jake Copeland (absent but reachable by phone) and Brian Bowerman (present).
- Council reviewed resumes and discussed process for filling the vacancy.
- Motion was made to appoint Jake Copleand to fill the Vacant Council Member Seat.

Motion: Jeff Marvin
Second: Seth Fisher
Vote: Appoint Jake Copeland to the council seat: Yes – Seth Fisher, Sadat Rice, Jeff Marvin, Kimberly Bruce, Ronnie Adams (unanimous)

Resolution 2026-01: Rules of Proceedings for 2026 City Council Meetings

- Resolution establishes procedural rules for meetings (date, time, order of business) pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. 14-43-501.
- Council reviewed draft resolution; changes could be made as desired.
- No substantive discussion or amendments noted.

Motion: Seth Fisher
Second: Ronnie Adams
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher, Sadat Rice, Jeff Marvin, Kimberly Bruce, Ronnie Adams)

Resolution 2026-02: Authorizing Mayor to Amend Telecommunications Lease Agreements

- Authorizes Mayor to execute amendments to existing lease agreements for telecommunications facilities on city property in order to add a right of first refusal.
- Company has offered the city $5,000–$6,000 for this right.
- Mayor recommends never selling the lease, as it provides a monthly income to the city. Any future sale must be approved by council, not by mayor alone.
- Additional fees ($150/month) apply if additional equipment is added to towers.

Motion: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher, Sadat Rice, Jeff Marvin, Kimberly Bruce, Ronnie Adams)

Ordinance 2026-01: Zoning Variance for 17-Acre Parcel on Wire Road

- Request for zoning change from R1 to R4 on a specific 17-acre property to allow placement of a mobile home. Applicant intends eventually to build a single-family dwelling, but timing is unclear.
- Planning Commission recommends approval with a 10-year time limit; after 10 years, the property must revert to R1 zoning, removal of the mobile home required unless council acts to extend the variance.
- All necessary floodplain approvals obtained; mobile home to be placed two feet above regulatory flood elevation.
- Ordinance binds the zoning to the property (not the individual); only one mobile home allowed; any additional structures or change in use require city permitting.

Motion: Kimberly Bruce (motion to approve and read by title only for 2nd and 3rd readings)
Second: Jeff Marvin
Vote: Approved for 2nd and 3rd readings by title only: Seth Fisher, Sadat Rice, Jeff Marvin, Kimberly Bruce, Ronnie Adams (unanimous); subsequently, Ronnie Adams moved to adopt, seconded by Seth Fisher—adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher, Sadat Rice, Jeff Marvin, Kimberly Bruce, Ronnie Adams)

Discussion: Artificial Intelligence Policy for Mulberry

- City attorney provided a draft AI policy for council's review.
- No resolution or action taken at this meeting; council to review policy over the next month.
- Will be considered for approval at the February meeting.
- School district has implemented a similar policy based on state recommendations; council encouraged to review state code and policy details.

Mayor's Report

- Industrial Park Drive reconstruction resumed; heavier base materials and 8-inch concrete being installed (up from 6 inches), with change orders approved for improved foundation.
- Water treatment plant expansion and upgrades are proceeding well; relay and actuator issues at the East tank repaired, improving water pressure and addressing water hammer in system.
- Frozen pressure reducing valve suspected; new SCADA system installation

pending (expected late Feb–March); overnight system shut down will be required—notice will be given to public.
- Plans in place to install more valves for better isolation during repairs and to continue with Eighth Street and Alma Avenue water line replacements.
- Cost estimates for water line projects provided by engineers; higher costs noted due to required boring/service line replacements and addition of new valves.
- Plan to circulate engineer quotes/estimates to council for review.
- Possible new leak reported on First Street to be investigated.
- Ongoing coordination with Mexican restaurant project on Industrial Park Drive; driveways designated, project pending start by owner.
- Recycling center bins collected by Green Source (River Valley, Clarksville); city pays $75 haul fee; materials sorted offsite.
- Electronics and scrap metal recycling available; city sells metals to private recycler.

Council Comments and Community Announcements
- Upcoming Cars and Coffee event at First Assembly Church, February 21; proceeds to benefit church youth.
- Concerns raised and discussed about street patching needs—Main Street, Church Street, and Alma are priorities.
- Mayor Baxter reported encouragement from state authorities that a $300,000 grant for Main Street overlay is likely for December 2026 funding, with construction in spring 2027.

Boys and Girls Club Introduction
- Zach Miller introduced as director for the Mulberry Boys and Girls Club/Diamond Hills.
- Announced club's ongoing outreach and requested continued support from city and council.
- Club invited to provide regular updates to council.

Citizens Signed Up To Speak
None

Adjournment
With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Motion: Jeff Marvin
Second: Sadat Rice
Vote: Unanimous (all present voted aye)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m. The next regularly scheduled City Council meeting will be on February 17, 2026.

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

Carla Dickerson Recorder/Treasurer