CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – April 21, 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:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Executive Assistant to the Mayor
Melissa Sampson, Director of Finance
Shannon Gregory, Police Chief
Alex Walker, Public Works Director
Jason Sumpter, Fire Chief
Tammy Watts, Branch Director of the Ralph D. Graf Library of Mulberry
Suzy Ferguson, Cemetery Committee
Sean Brister, City Attorney
Jeremy Shores, Hawkins Weir Engineering
Michael McClurkin
Candy Bonds
Evan Fain
Michael Harp
Mandy Oestreich
James Gray II
Laci Tolleson
Cathy Adams
Owen Fain
Kay Baxter
Scott Oestreich
James Gray Sr.
Adam Tolleson
Cindy McClurkin

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:

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

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

Consent Agenda

The consent agenda included approval of the March regular meeting minutes and March financial statements. Two corrections were noted: Jeff Marvin was incorrectly shown as coming in late on the second page (should show as present), and Mandy was listed twice as a visitor.

Motion: Kimberly Bruce
Second: Seth Fisher
Vote: Approved unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Departmental Reports

Police Department – Police Chief Shannon Gregory

- 137 calls for service in March
- 45 traffic stops with 10 citations issued
- 6 arrests (2 felony, 4 misdemeanor)
- 33 reports taken
- 478 building checks conducted
- Updated policy manual provided to council on thumb drives for review
- Resolution to approve policy manual will be presented next month

Fire Department – Fire Chief Jason Sumpter

- 25 total calls in March (19 medical, 1 motor vehicle accident, 3 grass/brush fires, 2 public assistance)
- Participating in Mulberry Days Parade this Saturday
- Preparing for Fourth of July Independence Day celebration with bounce house and water slide reserved
- Selling raffle tickets for cash giveaway fundraiser
- Organizing pie auction, car show, and hamburger sales for July event

Public Works – Director Alex Walker

- 24 service calls in March
- 42 meter readings with 19 re-reads
- Placing sticky notes at homes with unusual readings to alert customers of potential leaks
- 7 water shut-offs performed
- 77 people participated in recycling
- 3 water leaks repaired

Additional Reports

Library – Library Director Tammy Watts

- Monday Meals program averaging 36 students per week
- String instrument classes growing with concert planned for May
- Chair size class increased from 10 to 12 attendees weekly
- Two author visits in March: Amy Ward (young adult author) and Steve Hurley
- Friends of the Library garage sale held March 27-28
- March statistics: 2,485 visits, 38 programs with 632 attendees, 207 passive programs, 877 books checked out, 726 books checked in, 56 computer uses, 487 Wi-Fi uses with 76 users

Cemetery Committee – Suzy Ferguson

- New pavilion installation completed after three years of planning
- 30 gallon sugar maples planted along south drive (golden and red varieties)
- Memorial tree program available at $400 per tree to honor/memorialize individuals
- Decoration ceremony scheduled for May 17 (Sunday after Mother's Day) with pavilion dedication
- Honoring American Legion Post 149 for their contribution to pavilion construction
- Forest Service recommendation discussion

Old Business

Ninth Street Paving Bids

Public Works Director Alex Walker presented three bids for Ninth Street improvements. Pave Con bid $89,000 to reclaim 6 inches and add cement stabilization with asphalt overlay. Forest Green bid $50,000 to scarify existing pavement and add 2-inch asphalt overlay with water valve and manhole adjustments. McKenzie Asphalt bid $33,460 for 2-inch overlay without scarification. Discussion included concerns about drainage issues and the need to address ditches before paving.
Motion: Jeff Marvin
Second: Ronnie Adams
Vote: Approved unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

New Business

Ordinance 2026-02: Public Hearing Notice Procedures Amendment

An ordinance amending Ordinance 2007-04 to clarify public hearing notice procedures by replacing newspaper publication requirements with posting at five designated public places, conforming posting periods to three-day FOIA requirements, and reducing property sign posting from 15 to 7 days for variance hearings.

Motion to suspend rules and read by title only: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Motion to approve: Jeff Marvin
Second: Seth Fisher
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Motion to approve emergency clause: Jeff Marvin
Second: Seth Fisher
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Ordinance 2026-03: Zoning Map Variance Approval

An ordinance approving a variance to reclassify property at 16 East First Street from R1 Single Family Residential to R3 Multi-Family Residential for Evan Fain and Owen Fain to construct multiple single-unit rental dwellings. The property consists of Lots 7, 8, and south half of Lot 9, Block 9, original town of Mulberry.

Motion to suspend rules and read by title only: Kimberly Bruce
Second: Ronnie Adams
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Motion to approve: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Highway 215 Sewer Line Extension Project Bids

Jeremy Shores from Hawkins Weir Engineering presented five bids received April 7, 2026. Phillips Construction submitted the low bid at $358,112, followed by Crawford Construction at $381,031, Rural Ridge Construction at $389,481, Patriot Underground Solution Specialist at

$431,248.50, and Goodwin and Goodwin Incorporated at $460,911. The engineer's estimate was $591,490. All low bids came in under the engineer's estimate.

Motion to approve: Jeff Marvin
Second: Ronnie Adams
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Ordinance 2026-04: Private Club Alcohol Sales Permitting Process (First Reading)

First reading by title only of an ordinance establishing a permitting process for businesses licensed by the state to sell alcoholic beverages, levying permit fees and 2% supplemental tax. This establishes the procedure for applications but does not approve any alcohol sales. Each applicant would require individual council approval by ordinance.

Motion to suspend rules and read by title only: Seth Fisher
Second: Jake Copeland
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Ordinance 2026-05: Emergency Sewer Repair Authorization

An ordinance ratifying emergency repairs to a ruptured sewer line in Little Mulberry Creek crossing, authorizing contract with Goodwin and Goodwin Inc. for $130,520, waiving competitive bidding due to emergency conditions, and appropriating necessary funds for repair. The break was discovered in the transmission line, ADEQ was immediately notified, and pumps were shut down to prevent environmental violations.

Motion to read in full and waive remaining readings: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Motion to approve: Seth Fisher
Second: Damien Sadat Rice
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Motion to approve emergency clause: Kimberly Bruce
Second: Ronnie Adams
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Mayor's Report -- Industrial Park Development and Infrastructure Updates

New Industrial Park Businesses

- James Gray, President/CEO of CELO Transport Incorporated, purchased land for flatbed trailer operations
- HT Fasteners (Hawging Time LLC) owned by Jeff Reeves and Cody Morris purchased property for oil and gas industry fastener supply business

Water Infrastructure Projects

- 12-inch transmission line break repair completed by Crossland construction
- Break occurred due to improper bedding during original installation
- Coordinated with Dyer for emergency water connection during repairs
- Water treatment plant upgrade progressing with new clarifier and three filters operational
- Old equipment being removed and filter media replacement scheduled
- Oklahoma Tank to inspect and vacuum East water tank
- New clear well tank connections completed, awaiting health department approval

Other Projects

- Industrial Park Drive reconstruction continuing with traffic routed to east side
- Sidewalk project from Senior Center to Dollar General expected to bid mid-May
- Five staff members from Senator Boozman's office visited to discuss potential project funding

Citizens Signed Up To Speak

Cindy McClurkin, Mulberry

Ms. McClurkin addressed the council regarding water service restoration to her family home at 425 Church Avenue. The home was built in the early 1900s and historically served by a city water line from the rear of the property. In February, when requesting service restoration, they were told the line was damaged during tornado shelter construction on adjacent school property. The city proposed they pay for a completely new line from Church Street. Ms. McClurkin argued the damage was not customer-caused but resulted from construction decisions involving public entities. She requested the city assume full responsibility and expense for restoring water service to both the home and yard, including the existing outside faucet. She provided cost estimates showing significant expense ranging from approximately $3,100 to over $12,000 depending on routing options.

After extensive discussion regarding water service history, easements, and various routing options, the council agreed to settle the matter by providing a new meter and tap on Church Street at city expense and paying Ms. McClurkin $3,100 upon signing a release. The funding will come from the water fund repair and maintenance line item.

Motion to approve settlement terms: Jake Copeland
Second: Jeff Marvin
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Water Policy Amendment

Motion to amend water policy to reclaim taps when accounts are inactive for twelve months.

Motion to approve: Jake Copeland
Second: Seth Fisher
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Damien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes)

Additional Council Reports

- Kimberly Bruce reported successful spring cleanup with 32 volunteers, including 23 from CJS youth programs, collecting bags of trash and metal
- Damien Sadat Rice reported the Cars and Coffee event at Senior Center raised food donations, with next event May 23rd at Wildflower Cafe themed "Cars, Biscuits and 1950s"
- Discussion of truck traffic issues on Jewel Drive with requests for no-truck signage

Adjournment

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

Motion: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Unanimous (all present voted aye)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m. The next regularly scheduled City Council meeting will be on May 19, 2026.

These minutes were taken by: Steve Hurley

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

Carla Dickerson, Recorder/Treasurer