CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – July 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
Daimien 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
Thell Riddle, Police Officer
Alex Walker, Public Works Director
Jason Sumpter, Fire Chief
Tammy Watts, Branch Director of the Ralph D. Graf Library of Mulberry
Chad Puryear, Arkansas State Representative
Kay Baxter
Laci Tolleson
Scott Oestreich
Shawntill Puryear
Adam Tolleson
Mandy Oestreich

Call to Order

Mayor Baxter called the Mulberry City Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Baxter offered the opening prayer, 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
Daimien 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 six out of six Council Members present, a quorum was established.

Special Presentation – Arkansas House of Representatives State Citation

State Representative Chad Puryear presented an Arkansas House of Representatives State Citation to Police Chief Shannon Gregory and Officer Thell Riddle in recognition of their actions on June 14, 2026, at Bluff Hole Park, where they responded without hesitation to a swift-water emergency involving juvenile victims swept away by the current. The citation recognized that their judgment, bravery, and selfless performance of duty directly contributed to the successful rescue of human lives and represents the highest traditions of law enforcement service. Representative Puryear also commended both officers for their consistent presence at community events and their representation of public service.

Consent Agenda

The consent agenda included the June regular minutes and June financial statements. No corrections were noted.

Motion to approve the consent agenda included the June regular minutes and June financial statements: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Approved unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Daimien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Departmental Reports

Police Department – Police Chief Shannon Gregory

- 138 calls for service in June
- Forty-three traffic stops with twelve citations issued
- Eight arrests (seven misdemeanor, one felony)
- 661 building checks conducted
- Fifty-four cleanup orders issued

Fire Department – Fire Chief Jason Sumpter

- Fourteen total calls in June (nine medical, three smoke investigations, one grass fire, one weather-related call)
- Reported the Independence Day fireworks celebration was well attended; the Fire Department Auxiliary took in approximately $3,200 after expenses
- Raffle tickets ($20 each) are on sale now through the annual Mike Gray Memorial Chili Dinner in March for a two-person helicopter hog hunt on a Texas ranch
- Announced the department will assist with the Halloween Trunk-or-Treat on Main Street on Saturday, October 31, which is planned to include a car show, children's games, a costume contest, and a burnout contest
- One tanker truck is out of service due to a tank leak, with a patch repair planned within the week
- Council discussed volunteer staffing and compensation. The department currently has twenty-seven volunteers against a target of thirty, most of whom hold full-time jobs, and received a per-call pay increase last year. Finance Director Sampson asked whether the

compensation discussion should continue in the general meeting; Mayor Baxter ruled that it could because no individual personnel matters were being discussed. Council Member Sadat Rice requested that the open volunteer positions be advertised on the city's Facebook page

Public Works – Director Alex Walker

- Twelve service calls in June
- Thirty-three meter readings
- Thirteen meter changeouts
- Eight water shut-offs performed
- Eighty-eight people participated in recycling
- Three water leaks, all on city lines
- Industrial Park Road update: traffic has been switched to the completed lane, and the contractor is preparing to pour concrete on the east lane, which requires a 28-day cure. Council Member Sadat Rice expressed concerns about the length of the project and access difficulties, including fire apparatus access at the fire station. Mayor Baxter noted the contract runs through December 31, 2026, with financial penalties for late completion, and that access is controlled by the contractor and project engineers
- Council Member Marvin asked about discolored water; a recent occurrence was traced to valve maintenance and was flushed out. Marvin suggested the 12-inch cast iron line be blown off to clear accumulated sediment and offered to show crews the blow-off locations. Mayor Baxter directed Director Walker to coordinate with Marvin to identify all blow-off points
- Water Treatment Superintendent Darren Fields is recovering from surgery and is expected to return Monday. Jacob House is operating the plant under Fields' supervision, with constant communication by telephone. Mayor Baxter noted that plant numbers remain very good under a new state-approved treatment procedure, and that Fields may brief the Council on the procedure next month

Additional Reports

Library – Branch Director Tammy Watts

- Summer reading program kicked off June 5 with a Jurassic Experience featuring face painting and a Dino ID program
- Beginning June 8, the Mulberry Community Food Pantry partnered with the library through its Summer Smiles program, providing food to children for eight consecutive Mondays while school is out; the library's companion Get Caught Reading program awards prizes for daily reading milestones of 10, 20, and 30 minutes
- Celebrated the United States semiquincentennial (250th anniversary) on June 26 with a water slide, hot dogs, and a bubble craft activity
- Reported that roof leaks persisting since October have begun creating a mold-like odor in the building; a roofer was on site within the past 24 hours, and Public Works is actively working on the repairs

Old Business

Resolution 2026-14: Correction of Resolution Numbering – Police Body-Worn Cameras

Steve Hurley read Resolution 2026-14, correcting the number assigned to a previously adopted resolution. The resolution authorizing the purchase of body-worn cameras for the Mulberry Police Department had inadvertently been assigned Resolution Number 2026-12, duplicating the number of the resolution accepting the donation of real property at 9 East Second Street. Resolution 2026-14 redesignates the body-worn camera resolution as Resolution Number 2026-13, confirms that all other provisions remain unchanged and in full force and effect, and authorizes the Mayor or Recorder/Treasurer to revise the city's official resolution index accordingly.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-14: Correction of Resolution Numbering – Police Body-Worn Cameras: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Daimien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

New Business

Resolution 2026-15: Award of the Ninth Street Paving Project

Steve Hurley read Resolution 2026-15, awarding the Ninth Street Paving Project to Forest Green Inc. The resolution accepts the bid from Forest Green Inc. in the amount of $50,000, authorizes the Mayor or Recorder/Treasurer to execute any necessary documents, and appropriates the necessary funds from the Sales Tax Capital Improvement/Street Fund to the Street Fund.

Mayor Baxter explained that the resolution formalizes the Council's earlier approval of the project. The city is currently undergoing state legislative and federal audits, which identified that certain actions require an adopted resolution in addition to a Council vote in order to satisfy federal requirements. Council Member Sadat Rice reported that a sinkhole is beginning to form on the south side of the west end of Ninth Street and offered to provide a photograph following the meeting.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-15: Award of the Ninth Street Paving Project : Jeff Marvin
Second: Ronnie Adams
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Daimien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Resolution 2026-16: Arkansas Rural Community Grant Application – Fire Department Turnout Gear Washer/Dryer System

Steve Hurley read Resolution 2026-16, authorizing the Mayor to submit an application to the Arkansas Rural Community Grant Program, Division of Rural Services, for funding to purchase a turnout gear washer and dryer system and structural turnout gear for the Crawford County District Two Mulberry Volunteer Fire Department. The resolution appropriates the required local cash match of $7,776.50 from the Mulberry Volunteer Fire Department special account, for a total estimated project cost of $15,553.00, and authorizes the Mayor or Recorder/Treasurer to execute all documents and administer any grant funds awarded.

Fire Chief Sumpter explained that the equipment is recommended by the NFPA and required by the state for the department to retain Act 833 funds. The grant, a 50/50 match, will provide an extractor washer capable of washing four sets of turnout gear, a drying rack that dries two sets, and one complete set of structural turnout gear (helmet, hood, gloves, jacket, and pants). The equipment uses a special detergent that removes carcinogens and smoke residue from the gear. Chief Sumpter noted the department has also applied separately for a grant to provide a second set of turnouts for each firefighter. Finance Director Sampson confirmed the matching funds are available in the special account.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-16 Arkansas Rural Community Grant Application – Fire Department Turnout Gear Washer/Dryer System: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Daimien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Resolution 2026-17: FUN Park Grant Application – ADA Accessible Fishing Pier at T.J. House Reservoir

Steve Hurley read Resolution 2026-17, authorizing the Mayor to submit an application for FUN Park grant funding through the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism for the development of an ADA accessible fishing pier, ADA accessible parking improvements, and related improvements at T.J. House Reservoir. The resolution acknowledges that the city must provide land by ownership or lease and must maintain the park and its facilities for a period of 25 years as required by the grant program, and authorizes the Mayor or Recorder/Treasurer to execute all necessary documents.

Mayor Baxter and Steve Hurley reviewed the project budget: the FUN Park grant provides $100,000, and the engineer's estimate is $137,370, leaving a city match of $37,370 to be paid from the Sales Tax Capital Improvement Fund. An earlier pier grant could not be used because bids came in well above the awarded amount; Hawkins-Weir Engineers, who consulted with the City of Van Buren regarding its Lake Lee pier, prepared the current estimate. Hurley noted the city has been advised that the Governor is prioritizing fishing piers and walking trails for this grant cycle, and that the ADA accessible concrete parking and sidewalk work is the largest cost driver. In response to a question from Council Member Sadat Rice, Hurley explained that the state requires proof of ownership or a lease of at least 25 years for the project site.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-17: FUN Park Grant Application – ADA Accessible Fishing Pier at T.J. House Reservoir: Jeff Marvin
Second: Seth Fisher
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Daimien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Ordinance 2026-06: Conducting Business with Persons or Entities Related to City Officials or Employees

Steve Hurley read Ordinance 2026-06 in its entirety for the first reading. Pursuant to Arkansas Code Annotated § 14-42-107(b)(1), the ordinance permits the City of Mulberry to enter into reasonable and customary contracts with the following businesses, which have ownership related to city officials and/or employees: (a) Dickerson Inc. (Recorder/Treasurer Carla Dickerson), for the purchase of items routinely sold to the public from the hardware store at prices equal to or less than those offered to the general public; (b) Arctic Temp Refrigeration and HVAC LLC (employee Melissa Sampson), for the purchase of labor and materials for HVAC repairs and installation; and (c) Crawford Construction Company (Mayor Gary Baxter), for the purchase of labor and materials for construction and repair. The ordinance repeals any conflicting ordinance provisions adopted under A.C.A. § 14-42-107 and includes an emergency clause.

Motion to waive the second and third readings of Ordinance 2026-06 Conducting Business with Persons or Entities Related to City Officials or Employees and read by title only: Kimberly Bruce
Second: Jeff Marvin
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Daimien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Steve Hurley read Ordinance 2026-06 by title only for the second and third readings.

During discussion, Council Member Bruce asked whether each related individual must be listed by name as the Council changes over time. Mayor Baxter stated that the ordinance, which was prepared by the City Attorney, can be amended at any time to add businesses, and that it does not preclude the city's bidding requirements for projects. Finance Director Sampson asked Council Members to report any businesses related to them so the information can be forwarded to the City Attorney.

Motion to approve Ordinance 2026-06 Conducting Business with Persons or Entities Related to City Officials or Employees: Seth Fisher
Second: Jeff Marvin
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Daimien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Steve Hurley read the emergency clause, declaring an emergency and providing that the ordinance shall take effect and be in full force after its passage, approval, and publication.

Motion to approve the emergency clause for Ordinance 2026-06 Conducting Business with Persons or Entities Related to City Officials or Employees: Kimberly Bruce
Second: Jeff Marvin
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Daimien Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Mayor's Project Updates

Mayor Baxter provided updates on ongoing city projects. The Industrial Park entrance project continues to progress. The Water Treatment Plant improvements have reached substantial completion, and the city has asked the funding agency to approve using remaining grant funds to replace the plant's aging metal roof, which has developed leaks. The Workman's project remains on schedule for an end-of-August opening; water service is already connected, all easements for the connecting sewer project have been obtained, and the sewer connection is projected for mid-August.

Mayor Baxter reported that the Vine Prairie bridge replacement project, previously funded by a $1 million federal grant and $400,000 from the state, has now been approved for an additional $500,000 through the State Aid Street Program, making it a $1.5 million project at no cost to the city. During construction, the road into the bottom lands will be completely closed for approximately one year, though access to the campground will remain available via the second bridge. The city continues to work with HUD on its $500,000 grant for the food pantry. The sidewalk project from the Senior Center to the Dollar General Market should be ready for bids soon, according to the project engineer, and the sewer project from Main Street toward Carter remains with the engineers and the Health Department.

Mayor Baxter shared several community announcements: the Mexican restaurant on Highway 64 is nearly ready to open and has its sign up; a beauty shop is planned for Exit 20; Vine Prairie Baptist Church has welcomed new pastor Sean O'Connor, and First Baptist Church of Mulberry has welcomed new pastor Matt Bond; a fundraiser will be held at the Senior Center on August 9 to help purchase a vehicle for delivering meals to seniors outside the area; the County Fair parade is September 12 at 11:00 a.m.; school starts August 11; and the school district's incoming superintendent, Troy Dean, comes highly recommended. Mayor Baxter also reported that the city is simultaneously undergoing a state legislative audit, a federal audit, and a water/sewer/sanitation audit. The state audit is expected to wrap up by the end of the week, and the audits have identified certain Council actions that require accompanying resolutions, which are being addressed.

Council Comments and Announcements

Council Member Sadat Rice reported that the Cars and Coffee event at the Senior Center drew approximately 19 cars and raised approximately $286 for the Senior Center, with all food and supplies donated. He requested cold patch for a hole on Tenth Street; Mayor Baxter asked him to coordinate with Director Walker after the meeting. He also asked about a $15,000 infrastructure grant announced on social media, which Mayor Baxter explained was the previously approved grant for the Senior Center generator, with the official statewide announcement made only recently. Finally, he asked about the sidewalk from the Senior Center

to the Dollar General Market stopping short of the store; Mayor Baxter explained the sidewalk stops at the property line and that an easement will cover the portion crossing private property.

Council Member Marvin thanked Public Works for the street patching completed over the past month, noting he has received many compliments.

Citizens Signed Up to Speak

No citizens signed up to speak.

Adjournment

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

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. The next regularly scheduled City Council meeting will be on August 18, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

These minutes were taken by: Steve Hurley

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

Carla Dickerson, Recorder/Treasurer