CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – August 18, 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
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
Jason Sumpter, Fire Chief
Alex Walker, Public Works Director
Darren Fields, Water Treatment Plant Superintendent
Becky Correro
Anthony Correro
Scott Oestreich
Mandy Oestreich
Kay Baxter
Dottie Perrier

Call to Order

Mayor Baxter called the Mulberry City Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Baxter offered the opening prayer, in which he gave thanks for the protection of citizens during severe storms on August 17, 2026, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call

Steve Hurley, Executive Assistant to the Mayor, called the roll in alphabetical order by last name:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Seth Fisher, Ward 1 Position 1
Jake Copeland, Ward 2 Position 1
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.

Consent Agenda

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

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

Departmental Reports

Police Department – Police Chief Shannon Gregory

- 157 calls for service in July
- Fifty-seven traffic stops with thirty citations issued
- Five arrests (three misdemeanor, two felony)
- Fifteen assists to outside agencies
- 826 building checks conducted
- Thirty cleanup orders issued
- Police Chief Gregory reported the department assisted the Mountainburg Police Department on August 17, 2026, following severe storm damage in that area

Fire Department – Fire Chief Jason Sumpter

- Thirty-three total calls in July (nineteen medical, three structure fires, three grass fires, two motor vehicle accidents, one public assist, two traffic control assists for the Police Department, one fire alarm, and one canceled call)
- A tanker truck reported out of service was repaired and returned to service the same evening

Public Works – Director Alex Walker

- Thirteen service calls in July
- Twenty-five meter readings
- Nine meter rechecks
- Twenty water shut-offs performed
- Ninety people participated in recycling
- One water leak, on a city line
- Director Walker reported ongoing work to locate blow-off points on the 12-inch cast iron water line toward the interstate; crews traced approximately 200 feet of line before losing signal with their line locator and are continuing efforts to identify the remaining points

Old Business

None.

New Business

Resolution 2026-18: Declaring 454 North Main Street a Public Nuisance and Ordering Condemnation, Abatement, or Demolition

Steve Hurley read Resolution 2026-18, declaring the residential structure(s) located at 454 North Main Street (Parcel ID 760-00041-000) to be unused, unsafe, decaying, and a public nuisance, and ordering their condemnation, abatement, or demolition. The resolution orders the record owner(s) to demolish or abate the structure within thirty (30) days of the resolution's effective date; authorizes the Public Works Director, Building Official, or designated contractors to enter the property and demolish the structure if the owner fails to comply; authorizes the Mayor or Recorder/Treasurer to assess all costs incurred against the property owner(s) and to file a municipal lien for those costs; and takes effect immediately upon passage, approval, and publication.

Public Works Director Alex Walker presented the Council with photographs of the property's exterior and video footage from Police Department body cameras documenting the interior, and explained that the property has been vacant, open to entry, and previously used by squatters. Walker reported the City has contacted the property owner on multiple occasions and is developing a standard condemnation procedure based on City ordinance; both the City Attorney and the City's electrical inspector have reviewed the matter. Mayor Baxter noted that condemned structures the City has demolished using its own crews and equipment have typically cost less than $3,000, compared with contractor bids that have run as high as approximately $6,000 for similar work.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-18: Declaring 454 North Main Street a Public Nuisance and Ordering Condemnation, Abatement, or Demolition: Jeff Marvin
Second: Seth Fisher
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Ordinance 2026-07: Amendment to Ordinance 2026-06 Regarding Contracted Services

Steve Hurley read Ordinance 2026-07 in its entirety for the first reading. Pursuant to Arkansas Code Annotated § 14-42-107(b)(1), the ordinance amends Ordinance No. 2026-06 to additionally authorize the City of Mulberry to contract with the following employees for services on terms reasonable and commensurate with industry standards: (a) Mandy Oestreich, for cleaning services; (b) Jessica Sharum, for cleaning services; and (c) Melissa Sampson, for electrical inspection services. Mayor Baxter explained the ordinance addresses an item identified during the City's ongoing federal audit.

Motion to waive the second and third readings of Ordinance 2026-07: Amendment to Ordinance 2026-06 Regarding Contracted Services and read by title only: Kimberly Bruce
Second: Seth Fisher
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)
Steve Hurley read Ordinance 2026-07 by title only for the second and third readings.

Motion to approve Ordinance 2026-07: Amendment to Ordinance 2026-06 Regarding Contracted Services: Jeff Marvin

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

Ordinance 2026-08: Amendment to Ordinance 2024-07 Regarding Residential Solid Waste Collection Rates

Steve Hurley read Ordinance 2026-08 in its entirety for the first reading. The ordinance amends Section 3(A) of Ordinance No. 2024-07 to set the monthly charge for residential solid waste collection at $16.52 per month (a 4.7% increase) and the monthly charge for each additional 96-gallon cart at $6.24 (a 4% increase), effective with the first billing cycle following passage, approval, and publication.

Finance Director Melissa Sampson and Mayor Baxter explained the rate adjustment is passed through under the City's existing collection contract, under which the contractor may periodically adjust rates based on fuel and other costs. Mayor Baxter noted the five-year contract is due for renewal or rebid in July 2027, and that the Council will need to decide, with at least 60 days' advance notice to the contractor, whether to renew the contract or solicit new bids. Council discussed the contract's rate-adjustment cap, generally recalling it to be approximately five percent.

Motion to waive the second and third readings of Ordinance 2026-08: Amendment to Ordinance 2024-07 Regarding Residential Solid Waste Collection Rates and read by title only: Jeff Marvin
Second: Ronnie Adams
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)
Steve Hurley read Ordinance 2026-08 by title only for the second and third readings.

Motion to approve Ordinance 2026-08: Amendment to Ordinance 2024-07 Regarding Residential Solid Waste Collection Rates: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Resolution 2026-19: Amendment of the March 19, 2024 Minutes to Include Fund Allocation Percentages for the John Deere Tractor Purchase

Mayor Baxter noted this resolution was a late addition to the agenda, distributed electronically to Council members shortly before the meeting. Steve Hurley read Resolution 2026-19, amending the official minutes of the March 19, 2024 regular Council meeting to include fund allocation percentages, funding sources, and financing terms discussed in connection with the Council's approval of a John Deere tractor with side-arm attachment for the Public Works Department, which were inadvertently omitted from the minutes as originally recorded and approved.

As amended, the March 19, 2024 minutes will reflect that Finance Director Melissa Sampson advised the Council the total purchase price of the tractor was $194,250.00, with a required down payment of $19,425.00 and a remaining balance of $174,825.00 to be financed. The purchase price, down payment, and ongoing payments were allocated fifty percent (50%) to the Street Fund and twenty-five percent (25%) each to the Water Fund and Sewer Fund, financed over

sixty monthly payments at an interest rate of 5.79% through Today's Bank, which offered the most favorable rate available to the City. Mayor Baxter explained a legislative audit identified that this information, while captured in the meeting's audio recording, had not been included in the written minutes as originally approved.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-19: Amendment of the March 19, 2024 Minutes to Include Fund Allocation Percentages for the John Deere Tractor Purchase: Jeff Marvin
Second: Ronnie Adams
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Resolution 2026-20: Arkansas Natural Resources Commission Grant Application – Water Treatment Plant Improvements

Steve Hurley read Resolution 2026-20, authorizing the Mayor or Recorder/Treasurer to execute documents to apply for funding administered by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC) for improvements to the City's Water Treatment Plant.

Mayor Baxter read into the record a letter from Terracon dated August 11, 2026, advising that the City's application under the Arkansas Natural Resources Division Emerging Contaminants (EC-SDC) Program had been selected to move forward for funding consideration. The application was submitted for installation of a solar-powered reservoir circulation system at T.J. House Reservoir to reduce stratification, control algae, and limit iron and manganese release; the submitted project cost was $250,000, fully grant-funded at no cost to the City.

Water Treatment Plant Superintendent Darren Fields explained the proposed circulation system to the Council. At the Mayor's request, Fields also briefed the Council — as anticipated in the July 21, 2026 minutes — on the plant's continuing use of peracetic acid (PAA) for pre-treatment of raw water, an approach developed with the Arkansas Department of Health over approximately three and a half years. Fields reported substantial reductions in disinfection byproducts since adopting the treatment, including a 72% reduction in trihalomethanes (TTHMs) at Mill Creek and a 69% reduction at Daytona, a 57% and 52% reduction respectively in haloacetic acids (HAA5s), and a total organic carbon reduction of 46.2% against a 35% regulatory threshold. Fields reported the plant is currently using approximately 3.3 parts per million of PAA against a Health Department cap of 15 parts per million, and that the treatment has reduced the plant's chlorine usage while maintaining strong disinfection results.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-20: Arkansas Natural Resources Commission Grant Application – Water Treatment Plant Improvements: Seth Fisher
Second: Jeff Marvin
Vote: Adopted unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Acceptance of Land Donation from Nathan Offutt

Mayor Baxter read a letter regarding a donation of vacant residential property offered by Nathan Offut, consisting of Lots One through Five and part of Lot Six in Block Seven, bordering the railroad tracks behind the City's maintenance lots. Mayor Baxter explained the property's only access is via Heard Street, which is not maintained past that point. Per the City Attorney,

acceptance of the donation requires only a Council voice vote, after which the City Attorney will prepare the deed and forward it to Mr. Offut for signature.

Motion to approve acceptance of the land donation from Nathan Offut: Jeff Marvin
Second: Kimberly Bruce
Vote: Approved unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)

Mayor's Project Updates

Mayor Baxter reported that Council members serving on the City's water/sewer rate-setting board are required to complete a new mandatory training requirement, with board members serving as of January 1, 2025 required to complete at least eight hours of provider training by December 31, 2026; members with ten or more years of board service are exempt. Mayor Baxter cautioned that the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission may treat a provider as being in financial distress, including withholding state turnback funds, if the majority of the board does not complete the training, citing examples of other cities in the region that lost turnback funds after failing to complete required rate studies.

Mayor Baxter reported that the Water Treatment Plant improvements have reached substantial completion, with contractors finishing remaining punch-list items. The Workman's Travel Center is now expected to open in late September or early October. The Industrial Park Drive project remains in progress; the City is pursuing damages from the contractor for project delays, including a previously approved $80,000 change order approved with the City Attorney's concurrence, and the City Attorney continues discussions with the contractor's insurer.

Mayor Baxter reported that the City's dispute with the water tower refurbishment contractor over installation of a mixer system has been resolved following a meeting with the contractor's attorney, company CEO, and representatives; the contractor is expected to resume work, including completing the water towers according to contract, within approximately two weeks. Additional costs may be required to address previously undiscovered lead paint on the east tank, which falls outside the original contract scope.

Mayor Baxter announced that U.S. Senator John Boozman will visit the City on August 19, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. at the Community Center and fairgrounds for a USDA event recognizing federal funding received for the Water Treatment Plant, and that Council members are welcome to attend.

Mayor Baxter asked citizens to place storm debris at the roadside for City pickup and stated that flowers scattered by the storm at the City cemetery not be collected until after Monday to allow citizens time to retrieve them.

Council Comments and Announcements

Council Members noted that the Ninth Street repair had been completed and offered compliments on recent street patching around town, and thanked the contractor for cleaning up the school grounds ahead of the start of the school year.

Council discussed continuing power outages affecting several streets following the August 17, 2026 storm; Mayor Baxter reported that OG&E had brought in approximately fifty additional

outside crews, plus thirty more for tree cutting and trimming, prioritizing restoration of power to water systems, and that the City had opened the Senior Center as a safe room during the storm.

Citizens Signed Up to Speak

No citizens signed up to address the Council.

Adjournment

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

Motion: Jeff Marvin
Second: Sadat Rice
Vote: Approved unanimously (Seth Fisher-yes, Ronnie Adams-yes, Jake Copeland-yes, Kimberly Bruce-yes, Sadat Rice-yes, Jeff Marvin-yes)
The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m. The next regularly scheduled City Council meeting will be on September 15, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

These minutes were taken by: Steve Hurley

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

Carla Dickerson, Recorder/Treasurer