

**MINUTES OF THE BENTON HARBOR CITY COMMISSION  
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
FEBRUARY 22, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Benton Harbor City Commission was called to order by Mayor Muhammad at 7:00p.m. Invocation led by Commissioner Henderson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Edwards. Roll call showed the following members present: Commissioners Adams (left at 8:39pm), Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats. Also present: City Manager Mitchell, Director of Public Safety McGinnis, Assessor Story, Community and Economic Director Little and City Clerk Moore.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Henderson to approve the Regular and Closed Minutes of February 7, 2022. Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats

**APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Edwards and supported by Commissioner Isom to approve the Accounts Payable Listing.** Discussion included questions on paying Fifth Third Bank for Camera Equipment, paying Whirlpool \$15,825.78 and paying Denny Edward for Training and Continuing Education. Manager Mitchell will follow up with answers to those questions. **Motion Did Not Carry** on the following roll call vote. YEAS: Commissioners Edwards, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: Commissioners Clark-Griffin, Henderson, Henry, Adams. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats. Mayor Muhammad stated bills cannot be paid. **Commissioner Henry rescinded her No Vote and changed to a Yes vote. Motion Carried.**

**UPDATE – COUNTY COMMISSIONER YARBROUGH**

Commissioner Yarbrough mentioned a Homeowner Assistance program with MSHDA, she left the information with Clerk Moore.

FCC has a program to help with cost of Wifi. Information can be found at [fcc.gov/affordable-connectivity-program](http://fcc.gov/affordable-connectivity-program)

Announced that Alex Little has been appointed to the Berrien County Planning Commission.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Lee Reed gave an update on the Master Plan progress. He stated the Ward tour was completed yesterday and Paul Lippens with McKenna is ready to attend the next Commission meeting. He will be providing a timeline and is willing to arrive early to discuss any existing conditions with the Commissioners at Large. He also gave a reminder to complete the Berrien County Trails questionnaire.

Annie Brown, candidate for State Representative wanted to provide a reminder about issues she is passionate about, after discussing some items with voters, they mentioned broadband, affordable housing, helping municipalities with high water levels.

Michael Hoyh mentioned Don Meeks with Meeks Construction now the only asphalt making apparatus in the city. Visit Berrien County Strong if you missed the Quilt Exhibition at the Citadel. Stated that it's now the 4<sup>th</sup> year that the transition of 312 Broadway hasn't taken place.

Marvis Haywood mentioned he's pleased to see the job fair coming on Thursday. He would like to see investment in the inner city and stated that the city needs a Finance Director to understand where the dollars are going.

## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

Commissioner Clark-Griffin requested to pull **AUTHORIZATION OF THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH ROGGOW CONSTRUCTION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF FARMERS MARKET PAVILION PHASE 2** from the agenda for discussion.

Commissioner Adams requested to pull **RESOLUTION APPOINTING WILLIE LAWRENCE MD AS MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR THE CITY OF BENTON HARBOR** and **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TRANSPFER OF ARPA FUNDS FOR REVENUE LOSS TO THE GENERAL FUND AND THE UTILITY FUND** from the agenda for discussion.

**The following Consent Calendar items were moved by Commissioner Singleton and supported by Commissioner Edwards. Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None, Abstain: None, Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats

APPROVAL OF THE 114<sup>TH</sup> BLOSSOMTIME FESTIVAL GRAND FLORAL PARADE AND RUN/WALK FOR THE BUDS

## **SEPARATED ITEMS**

**Motion was made by Commissioner Singleton and supported by Commissioner Edwards** for the **AUTHORIZATION OF THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH ROGGOW CONSTRUCTION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF FARMERS MARKET PAVILION PHASE 2**. During Discussion, it was clarified that the City is paying the difference of the USDA grant of \$94,900 and the low bid amount from Roggow of \$128,400. It was explained by Manager Ellis that the project is a four part process and if the project is not approved, the federal grant money goes back, decreasing the opportunity to obtain more in the future. Discussion also surrounded hiring residents and implementing the previous resolutions passed related to jobs for citizens. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Henderson, Isom, Singleton, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: Commissioners Henry, Adams, Abstain; None, Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Edwards and supported by Commissioner Henderson approving a RESOLUTION APPOINTING WILLIE LAWRENCE MD AS**

**MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR THE CITY OF BENTON HARBOR.** During discussion, Mayor explained the position of Director of Public Health and Medical Director and how working together will be for the better health of the community. Several Commissioners expressed their support for Dr Lawrence. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Henry, Isom, Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None, Abstain; None, Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Edwards and supported by Commissioner Henderson approving a RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF ARPA FUNDS FOR REVENUE LOSS TO THE GENERAL FUND AND THE UTILITY FUND.** During discussion, the amount of shortfall was discussed, Manager Mitchell presented an explanation of the cash shortage issues through August 31, 2022. **Motion was made by Commissioner Henderson and supported by Commissioner Clark-Griffin to ADD TO THE RESOLUTION TO DIRECT CITY MANAGER MITCHELL TO HAVE THE CONTRACTED FINANCE DIRECTOR OR REPRESENTATIVE FROM PLANTE MORAN ATTEND THE PERSONNEL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE AND CITY COMMISSION MEETINGS TO ANSWER QUESTIONS AS IT RELATES TO THE CITY FINANCES.** Further discussion continued regarding the revenue loss and allocations and rules for ARPA. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Isom, Singleton, Edwards, Henderson Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: Commissioners Adams, Clark-Griffin, Henry, Abstain; None, Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Assessor Story stated the 2022 Assessments are wrapping up and assessment notices should be in the mail in about a week. The March Board of Review will be posted on the notices along with her contact info. Business Personal Property statements were due today.

Manager Mitchell stated the City does have a Finance Director keeping up with every cent in the City. She provides the budget and sets up the audit. Months ago a process was set up where any questions can be answered prior to the meeting just by contacting the Manager's office.

## COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Clark-Griffin stated it was amazing how many unanswered questions and emails there are and that it's amazing how much money the city has gotten and have only seen water bills paid. Urges residents to pay attention to the money coming in and out, which should be directed toward the citizens. The Financial system needs to be reformed.

Commissioner Adams stated she isn't going to let the residents believe she isn't doing her job. Citizens should hold the Electors accountable for what they elected them to do. \$54,000 from the Brownfield should have a hold on it so that it can be used for future training.

Commissioner Henry stated that Benton Harbor trails don't connect anymore and anyone filling out the Berrien County Trails questionnaire should mention that the trails need to be made whole. Would like colleagues to support the asking of the manager to see the lead line bids. Believes everything Abonmarche has done has not been in the favor of the city.

Commissioner Edwards mentioned that he comes to the offices of the city to get answers to his questions. States there have been a lot of activities in the last 4 years and barely sees Commissioners attend. Keep an eye out for neighbors.

Commissioner Isom thanked Commissioner Yarbrough for the update and congratulated Dr Lawrence for joining the team. Is glad to see the job fair coming Thursday. Stated that the city cannot not pay their bills. Reminded Commissioners about the Manager evaluation due March 4.

Commissioner Singleton congratulated Dr Lawrence and appreciates the great things he has to offer. Reminded everyone that if they know anyone looking for a job to tell them to come to job fair Thursday.

Commissioner Henderson addressed that she voted no on the financials based on the information received, believes if bills can't be paid then spending needs to be cut back. Also mentioned there is not a shortfall of jobs, people that want to work can find jobs. And for the record, when the contract comes up with Plante Moran, it needs to be reviewed between the Commission and the Contractor, not the Manager and Contractor.

Mayor Muhammad congratulated Dr Lawrence on a unanimous vote. Stated he will be traveling to Lansing to meet with 12 other black mayors and Governor Whitmer to discuss the needs of respective communities and working with the urban alliance, that this health dialogue will hopefully help the urban areas.

### **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**A motion made by Commissioner Singleton and supported by Commissioner Edwards to adjourn the meeting and was carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Commissioners Adams, Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

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Tiffany Moore, City Clerk

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Marcus Muhammad, Mayor