

**MINUTES OF THE BENTON HARBOR CITY COMMISSION
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS
MARCH 7, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Benton Harbor City Commission was called to order by Commissioner Singleton at 7:02p.m. Invocation led by Commissioner Henderson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Clark-Griffin. Roll call showed the following members present: Commissioners Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats, Mayor Muhammad (arrived at 7:19pm). Also present: City Manager Mitchell, Director of Public Safety McGinnis, Assessor Story, Community and Economic Director Little, Attorney Racht and City Clerk Moore.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Henderson and supported by Commissioner Edwards to approve the Regular Minutes of February 22, 2022. Motion carried on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats, Mayor Muhammad.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

A motion was made by Commissioner Isom and supported by Commissioner Henderson to approve the Accounts Payable Listing. Discussion included the request of the Finance Director from Plante Moran to attend the meetings to answer questions regarding financials. Clarification was given on the 3 payments to Senior Nutrition Services, which is a CDBG project through Meals on Wheels. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote. YEAS: Commissioners Edwards, Henderson (with the annotation to make sure that dates are added to the AP listing, along with an explanation), Henry (also noting that an explanation is asked for), Isom, Singleton. NAYS: Commissioners Adams, Clark-Griffin. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats, Mayor Muhammad.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Miguel Clark asked about dumping on Riverside Rd, McGinnis responded that his department has been working all over the city and have caught some dumping, but are continuing to keep a look out, and urged the public to report any sightings.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Commissioner Adams requested to separate the following items from the Consent Calendar for discussion:

**APPROVAL TO USE UP TO ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS OF ARPA FUNDING TO MATCH A REQUESTED DONATION OF \$175,000 FROM WHIRLPOOL TO ASSIST THE CITY IN EXPANDING ITS ABILITY TO PROTECT
AMEND APPROVAL OF OPTION TO PURCHASE AND DEVELOPMENT MULTI-USE HOUSING PROJECT WITH HARBOR HABITAT**

RESOLUTOIN TO APPROVE THE RESIGNATION OF SYREETA HASSEL FROM THE DIAL-A-RIDE BOARD

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE RESIGNATION OF LISA VARRIE FROM THE DIAL-A-RIDE BOARD AND CEMETERY BOARD

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

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE RE-APPOINTMENT OF RICHARD HENSEL TO THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE RE-APPOINTMENT OF WILLIAM STOHLER TO THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE RE-APPOINTMENT OF JOHNATHAN PUGH TO THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

RESOLUTOIN TO APPROVE THE RE-APPOINTMENT OF JERRY EDWARDS TO THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF VIRGIL HATCHER TO THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF RICHARD RABBERS TO THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF CHARMAINE DAVIS TO THE CEMETERY BOARD

SEPARATED ITEMS

Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Edwards for the **APPROVAL TO USE UP TO ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS OF ARPA FUNDING TO MATCH A REQUESTED DONATION OF \$175,000 FROM WHIRLPOOL TO ASSIST THE CITY IN EXPANDING ITS ABILITY TO PROTECT.** During Discussion, it was clarified that the purpose is to reestablish the camera system throughout the City. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Henderson to **AMEND APPROVAL OF OPTION TO PURCHASE AND DEVELOPMENT MULTI-USE HOUSING PROJECT WITH HARBOR HABITAT.** During Discussion, it was clarified that the actual purchase has yet to be negotiated between the city and developer, this is the first step. Mayor

Muhammad stated that a lot of interest was shown on social media from those interested in an affordable housing opportunity. Director Little stated that a clause can be included in the purchase agreement stating that the land will be used for approved use or it will be reverted back. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Mayor Muhammad to APPROVE THE RESIGNATION OF SYREETA HASSEL FROM THE DIAL-A-RIDE BOARD. During Discussion, Commissioner Adams stated she pulled the item to ask the process of removing a member from a Committee by the Mayor. Mayor Muhammad stated that the resignation was based on an effort to apply for the Director position and understood being a board member and director at the same time was a conflict of interest. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Henry, Isom, Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

Motion was made by Commissioner Edwards and supported by Commissioner Adams to APPROVE THE RESIGNATION OF LISA VARRIED FROM THE DIAL-A-RIDE BOARD AND CEMETERY BOARD. During Discussion, Commission Adams stated that if resignations and appointments require votes of the Commission, so should removals. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Isom, Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

COMMUNICATIONS

Public Safety Director McGinnis thanked the Commission for approving the Resolution for the cameras. He reported there has been a rash of stolen vehicles, and guns were recovered in each vehicle. He has an officer injured during a foot chase where a gun, and eight ball of meth and \$4,000 cash were recovered. He gave his staff credit as they are short handed and busy.

Assessor Story stated that the 2022 Assessments were mailed out a week ago. If there are questions on the principle residence exemption or the value contact her to appeal. The Board of Review will meet Tuesday for an organizational meeting.

Director Little thanked the Commission for approving the resolutions for the cameras and Habitat's development. He stated that CDBG is moving along trying to spend the expenditure funds. The sidewalk project bids have been received and are being evaluated. His department is trying to get everything ready for the demolition project.

Planning Commission Chairperson Lee Reed introduced Paul Lippens with McKenna who gave an update on the Master Planning process. He provided a timeline and introduced "Best Benton Harbor" logos for review.

Mayor Muhammad requested a work session prior to the next Commission meeting to go over more of the process with the Planning Commission and Mr Lippens/McKenna.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Clark-Griffin thanked school board president, Robinson for attending. She would like to see more of the CARES Act and ARPA funding be used directly for the residents.

Commissioner Henry stated that the Commission needs to be diligent and rethink the process.

Commissioner Henderson thanked everyone who lined up to serve on different committees and boards and stated the Commissioners want to try to be as transparent as possible.

Commissioner Adams stated she would like to see barriers on Valley Dr to try to help prevent dumping. She also announced there is job training coming up for water filters starting Wednesday, there will be others as well, to reach out to her if interested.

Commissioner Edwards thanked the DDA members who applied for re-appointment. He is asking for volunteers to come help with the youth. There are programs coming up that need hands. He mentioned the Easter Egg event that will take place at Union Park and encouraged the Parks Committee to support that.

Commissioner Isom thanked the Police Departments for getting guns off the street. He congratulated all the appointees and thanked Mr. Lippens for getting the Master Plan together.

Commissioner Singleton stated that there will be discussion regarding Pot Holes at this month's Public Safety Committee meeting. He thanked those willing to serve on a committee.

Mayor Muhammad stated Government was supposed to be of, for, and by the people, that is the only way Democracy works. He would like to encourage everyone to make 2022 a year of reading. He announced the State of the City of Benton Harbor address to be held Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 7pm in the City Chambers, there will be limited seating, it will be streamed on social media. He mentioned his meeting at Governor Whitmer's residence with 11 other Black Mayors where they discussed the budget and State of Michigan Black Caucus goals, as well as the goal of the Urban Alliance.

A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Edwards to go into Closed Session at the request of City Manager Ellis Mitchell to review the manager's evaluation. Motion carried on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Commissioners Adams, Mayor Pro-Tem Seats.

The regular meeting recessed to go into Closed Session at 8:24p.m. and reconvened at 9:21 p.m. No action was taken as a result of the Closed Session.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Edwards to adjourn the meeting and was carried on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Adams, 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 9:22 p.m.

Tiffany Moore, City Clerk

Marcus Muhammad, Mayor