

**MINUTES OF THE BENTON HARBOR CITY COMMISSION
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS
JULY 18, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Benton Harbor City Commission was called to order by Mayor Muhammad at 7:01p.m. Invocation led by Commissioner Adams, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Singleton. Roll call showed the following members present: Commissioners Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. Members Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats. Also present: City Manager Mitchell, Public Safety Director McGinnis, Community and Economic Director/Assistant City Manager Little, Attorney Racht and City Clerk Moore.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Henderson and supported by Commissioner Adams to approve the Regular Minutes of July 5, 2022. Motion carried on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Ism, Singleton, Adams, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Henderson to approve the Accounts Payable Listing.

During Discussion, Commissioner Henry stated she received responses to her questions, but wanted to make sure her colleagues got it as well. She thanked the Finance Director and Manager and will be seeking more information on chargers for the attorney and engineer.

Commissioner Adams stated that a print out form the attorney was supposed to be provided every month and there's no update or report from the attorney when there are meetings twice a month. She hopes the taxpayers aren't going to incur costs for the Riverfest. And until a Finance Director is present to answer questions, she will not support.

Motion carried on the following roll call vote. YEAS: Commissioners Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: Commissioner Adams, Clark-Griffin. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Trenton Bowen stated at co-chair of the Riverfest Committee, the event is put on by non-profits and support by businesses, and the city doesn't incur any costs. He extended the invite for the event on August 5-7th.

Victoria White, 142 Parker, stated she was still concerned about the water bill increase. She asked if there was money given for the lead line replacement then why can't it be used for the 2019 improvements instead of increasing the water bill. She stated there has been no improvement on her block in 27 years and asked if there was a plan to do anything to the streets, sidewalks, or drains.

Emma Kinnard spoke in reference to the increase and that there's income tax money that's supposed to be working for the residents. There is concern to fix the sidewalks and inquired about a tree that was supposed to be removed in front of the garden. She stated children should be able to ride their bikes on the sidewalks and is concerned that weeds are growing where the lead lines were repaired instead of grass.

David Brown Sr, 1119 Broadway, discussed a tree leaning in front of his house with branches falling and the sidewalk is tore up, kids can't ride their bikes on it, people can't walk on the street and the sidewalk is not clean. He asked who cuts trees and keeps alleys clean and why does the Commission hear complaints when nothing is ever done about them.

Vera Singleton discussed a house on Union and Many that has been burning and is being used as a dump site. She stated there are too many eye sores and the city shouldn't look like that, she would like to see the property cleaned up.

Steven Boone asked the status of the proposed landlord ordinance and suggested to those with complaints that they submit them in writing.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Commissioner Adams requested to separate APPROVAL OF PILOT ORDINANCE FOR PROJECT "T" PHASE A from the Consent Calendar for discussion.

Commissioner Clark-Griffin requested to separate APPROVAL OF PILOT ORDINANCE FOR THE CORNER OF WALL STREET LIMITED DIVIDENT HOUSING ASSOCIATE, LLC from the Consent Calendar for discussion.

Commissioner Adams requested to separate APPROVAL OF \$75,000 GRANT FROM BROWNFIELD AUTHORITY FOR OX CREEK from the Consent Calendar for discussion.

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

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE CITY MANAGER MITCHELL TO ENTER INTO A 5 YEAR CONTRACT WITH MUNICIPAL ONE FOR WEBSITE REDESIGN AND SUPPORT

RESOLUTION APPROVING KUSHAVA CRAFT'S SPECIAL USE PERMIT FOR AN ADULT-USE CLASS C GROWER FACILITY LOCATED AT 261 WATER STREET IN BENTON HARBOR

SEPARATED ITEMS

Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Henderson for APPROVAL OF PILOT ORDINANCE FOR PROJECT "T" PHASE A

During Discussion, Commissioner Clark-Griffin inquired about the clause stating the time frame of January 2025-December 31, 2006, no longer than 2070. Manager Mitchell stated that this was in lieu of taxes. Clark-Griffin asked if these were supposed to go through the Planning Commission per their bylaws. Director Little stated that it hasn't gone to the Planning Commission yet, a planned development plan is being worked on that will define the boundaries. This applies only to the part associated with low income buildings.

Mayor Muhammad read the resolution and stated that it was needed as an MSHDA component in order to build and the Pilot is critical to development.

Commissioner Adams stated something was out of order about the whole plan and the processes taking place don't sit well for the residents. She stated the need for a visual to make sure residents get what they want.

Commissioner Edwards stated those living in his building want something like this to have a better building to live in.

Mayor Muhammad stated the MSHDA study states low income housing needs have increased and this is an opportunity to accommodate low income and people who want to move in new homes and commercial space for those who want to start businesses.

Commissioner Henry stated affordable housing is needed and some don't realize a community was building and all look the same and live in a little community together. This project is in a concentrated area. A public hearing was promised and there hasn't been one yet.

Commissioner Henderson stated the need for more housing and likes the idea of a mix of incomes. The city has a responsibility to re-build the community and that starts with housing.

Commissioner Singleton stated the housing stock in the State of Michigan is in bad shape and housing is needed. The population has decreased and the neighborhoods set the standards for what they want to be. The Pilot is not free, it's the way to set it up to get a project done.

With no further discussion, **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YAYS: Commissioners Isom, Singleton, Edwards, Henderson, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: Commissioners Henry, Adams, Clark-Griffin. Abstain: None. Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats.

Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Isom for the APPROVAL OF PILOT ORDINANCE FOR THE CORNER OF WALL STREET LIMITED DIVIDENT HOUSING ASSOCIATION, LLC

During Discussion, Commissioner Clark-Griffin inquired about Section 9. Mayor Muhammad stated this is a 55 unit development with low income housing, commercial space and a grocery store. He yielded to Representatives of the project Bob and Andy who described the need for a Pilot for development. Clark-Griffin asked what kind of grocery store. Reps responded that it would be a fresh produce and meat store with a minimum square footage of 5000. Clark-Griffin asked about the mental health aspect. Reps responded they will be working with Riverwood who will offer services to address the needs of the residents and that another aspect they are looking into is a workforce training center where hands on trades can be taught. Commissioner Adams asked who would be held accountable for the job training.

Mayor Muhammad asked the representatives to speak about funding. The reps described there is criteria to seek funding from MSHDA.

Commissioner Adams stated that it should revert back to the city if it is not used for it's intended purpose.

Commissioner Henry asked if the project included those that are homeless and how they were going to make sure residents would benefit, and stated the need for preferential services for residents.

With no further discussion, **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote. YAYS: Commissioners Isom, Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats.

Motion was made by Commissioner Singleton and supported by Commissioner Isom for the APPROVAL OF \$75,000 GRANT FROM BROWNFIELD AUTHORITY FOR OX CREEK During Discussion, Commissioner Adams asked if any work had been done and when would an overview be given. She stated the Brownfield Authority received funding and assed work was done and it was going to cost million. And wants to know why we are going back and doing something that has already been done. Would like to see if the work has been done and would like the Authority to look into if the work has been done. **Motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Clark-Griffin to table the APPROVAL OF \$75,000 GRANT FROM BROWNFIELD AUTHORITY FOR OX CREEK. Motion failed** on the following roll call vote: YAYS: Commissioners Clark-Griffin, Henry, Adams. NAYS: Commissioners Edwards, Henderson, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. Abstain: None. Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats. During further Discussion, Commissioner Isom asked for clarity on what the needs are. Mayor Muhammad stated the current process is requesting money from the federal government to allocate money for this project and this is the first phase. Commissioner Singleton stated there is no question of the condition and there is an opportunity now to get funds to get the project going and get the money while we can. Commissioner Henderson stated the project will improve lives and there is an opportunity to rebuild what was lost due to neglect. Mayor Muhammad stated it takes money to improve the quality of life. With no further discussion, **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YAYS: Commissioners Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: Commissioners Clark-Griffin, Adams. Abstain: None. Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats.

COMMUNICATIONS

Director McGinnis stated there is a proliferation of stolen vehicles, specifically 2011-2022 Kia and 2015-2022 Nissan. The department is trying to warn residents, if you don't have a security system it is recommended to get a bar. He also stated all abandon houses are being revisited and there will be movement.

Director Little stated he listens to what the Commission wants, acts on it, and then there is a fight about it. He stated advantage needs to be taken of the developments we get and Economic Development is a combination of things, there needs to be an increase of tax base and an increase in population.

Attorney Racht followed up on what McGinnis said, there are 10 files currently fighting tickets and there are several mechanisms to fight blight.

Clerk Moore stated she will be out of the office from Thursday to Monday, Absentee Applications and Ballots can still be dropped off during that time.

Manager Mitchell stated it takes time, effort and money to do the things we want to do. Projects are explored by staff before they are brought to the Commission. There are issued within the city that have not been addressed that the staff is trying to address.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Adams asked Director Little to share email with all of Commission. There are developments and other things that couldn't be done because of lack of funding.

Commissioner Clark-Griffin stated she sits in amazement that some department heads are stating questions are being answered and getting things done. She encouraged everyone to watch how everyone votes. There will be a Resource Fair for the 4th Ward residents put together by her and 1 other 4th ward resident.

Commissioner Henry stated the key to votes is how it affects the citizens. She encourages citizens to listen to meetings and listen to comments and votes.

Commissioner Edwards stated a good thing is it's a beautiful day and wishes everyone a beautiful night.

Commissioner Isom stated he was listing to the residents talk about sidewalks, drains, alleys, trees, trash and this show that public works needs a full crew and the Personnel & Finance Committee will work with the staff to look for ways to amp up public works.

Commissioner Henderson thanked everyone for coming out, the presentations and the staff for their hard work.

Commissioner Singleton stated that city services have to be looked at, it's tough to find people to work. Good things will be forgot about, bad things will keep coming up.

Mayor Muhammad stated that the Lead Service Line project is close to 80% completed. He spoke on funding for inspection of any other lead in the home. He stated if the water tower had not be renovated there would have been a bigger problem, it had to be done, the city started the project on their own, causing an increase to the water bill, it's not what was wanted, but what was necessary. After a 5 year period, it reverts back. There is a need for more developments and more people in the city to bring in more money. Saying no to proposals that do so will cause a bigger problem to be passed on.

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: YAYS: Commissioner Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Tiffany Moore, City Clerk

Marcus Muhammad, Mayor