

**MINUTES OF THE BENTON HARBOR CITY COMMISSION  
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
AUGUST 15, 2022**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Edwards to approve the Regular Minutes of August 1, 2022. Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Clark-Griffin, Edwards, Henderson, Henry, Singleton, Mayor Pro Tem Seats, Adams. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Commissioner Isom, Mayor Muhammad.

**APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE**

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

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

**PRESENTATION – PAUL LIPPENS, MCKENNA – MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Jamie Davis stated it was interesting that the city is 85% indigenous and the 15% are the masters of the master plan and listening to the presentation it is clear who the master is, and it's a shame to allow Europeans to be the master.

Spencer Nesbitt stated that housing is needed, he asked if an analysis has been done to see why what has been lost has been lost. Housing coming is not going to help anything, it's going to end up being the way it is now. Landlords should be the first ones to make sure the property is up. When it rains water stands everywhere. There is a problem if problems are being reported and things are not getting done.

Marvin Haywood stated that the city is a Home Rule City and everything voted on is law. He agrees that the Commissioners need to be on board, there is a plan but the help of the Commissioners is needed. Strategizing is the most important thing to do when dealing with governmental money.

Shaquille Turner inquired about the Heart of the City Award that was supposed to be awarded to Bonnie Young in 2020.

## CONSENT CALENDAR

### **Motion was made by Commissioner Singleton and supported by Commissioner Henderson to approve the PROCLAMATION – AUGUST 2022 AS BREASTFEEDING MONTH IN THE CITY OF BENTON HARBOR**

Commissioner Adams stated she doesn't understand why this item needs to be supported by the City when August is National Breastfeeding Month. Commissioner Singleton stated this proclamation was done last year as well, it's symbolic to show we support bringing awareness to the community. Commissioner Henderson stated that this is to bring awareness to the community on this particular issue. **Motion carried** on the following roll call vote: YAYS: Commissioners Henderson, Henry, Singleton, Mayor Pro Tem Seats, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Edwards. NAYS: None. Abstain: None. Absent; Commissioner Isom, Mayor Muhammad

## COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioner Edwards asked for a Point of Privilege. He explained there was a dispute in an email sent on August 3 where he was asked about being paid for working with the youth.

Mayor Pro Tem Seats asked Attorney Racht's opinion on if this point of privilege was appropriate. Attorney Racht asked for the email to be forwarded to him and he will discuss it with Commissioner Edwards and Manager Mitchell, if it is not rectified then Commissioner Edwards may speak freely at the next meeting.

Commissioner Clark-Griffin asked for a Point of Privilege. She stated she was told that a colleague was coming for her son, which means they are coming for her.

Mayor Pro Tem Seats stated that all disputes of personal matter need to be dealt with by the attorney and manager and if not rectified need to be dealt with by the Mayor.

Attorney Racht stated that he was in court this morning regarding a nuisance for a building that had been condemned by the city and the property owner was willing to plead guilty to the nuisance but was unwilling to do anything about it, they were only willing to pay the fines and costs but was told it had to be torn, made safe within 30-60 days or the city will ask for an order from the court to tear it down or make it safe. The city has 20 active nuisance violations regarding condemned buildings.

Director Little announce the summer youth program is coming to a close. The housing rehab program is moving along well. Getting ready to move on demolition, \$300,000 was set aside, but needed to make sure HUD requirements were met. Getting ready to get a contract together do initial asbestos inspections. Sidewalk program is coming to an end.

Manager Mitchell asked Mr Nesbitt to call and make an appointment to go over what's being done. He made clear that the Master Plan is the city's plan, not Mr Lippens plan, they are working hand in hand.

## COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Henry had no comments.

Commissioner Clark-Griffin announced the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Resource Fair on August 27 from 12-4 at 599 E Main, includes activities for the kids, clean up, prayer walk, food, giveaways.

Commissioner Edwards asked when did elected officials lose their civil rights, which means you have to take whatever you have to take with no defense.

Commissioner Henderson said sometimes sitting in these seats you take a hit on the chin whether you've done something or not, you have to have thick skin, as long as you know what you are trying to do in the city, it doesn't matter what others think, what matters is the end result. Thanked Mr Lippens for the presentation on the Master Plan and will continue to be a part of the Master Plan, which is our plan that we are actively putting together. Was aware of the award for Bonnie Young and from her understanding the past Clerk was supposed to send a certificate to her, was not aware that it wasn't.

Commissioner Adams stated there are some things that we can do and some that we can't as elected officials, not everyone is going to get along but there is business to be done. She receives complaints and passes it to management where they belong, the person that takes care of day to day operations, it's heavy to carry the burden of residents complaints and nothing gets done. She said there's no way we shouldn't have a racial equity department.

Commissioner Singleton stated this is the first time he's seen a plan being developed with everybody that wants to develop their opinion. He said in this seat you take a certain amount of criticism, the focus is on getting the city to the point we can all enjoy it, the opportunity is great.

Mayor Pro Tem Seats said one thing about fair housing is you can't discriminate or you will be sued. He hopes as a Commission, personal situations can be rectified. There's no super star on board, everyone gets 1 vote. Hopefully enough residents of the city to participate in the master planning.

## **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

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

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

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Tiffany Moore, City Clerk

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Marcus Muhammad, Mayor