

**MINUTES OF THE BENTON HARBOR CITY COMMISSION
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS
JANUARY 3, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Benton Harbor City Commission was called to order by Mayor Muhammad at 7:00p.m. Invocation was led by Commissioner Isom and Pledge of Allegiance was lead by Finance Director Williams. Roll call showed the following members present: Commissioners Adams, Clark-Griffin, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Singleton, Mayor Muhammad. Members Absent: Commissioner Edwards (arrived at 7:05pm), Mayor Pro Tem Seats (arrived at 7:04pm). Also present: City Manager Mitchell, Public Safety Director McGinnis, Assessor Story, Finance Director Williams and Clerk Moore

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Henderson to approve the Regular Minutes of December 19, 2022. Motion carried on the following roll call vote: YEAS: Commissioners Isom, Singleton, Adams, Clark-Griffin, Henderson, Henry, Mayor Muhammad. NAYS: None. Members Abstain: None. Members Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Seats, Commissioner Edwards.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

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

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Spencer Nesbitt stated Benton Harbor is sitting on a gold mine and it's up to the leaders to make that gold shine, the way to do that is to stop the bickering, the loud talking and arguing. We need to bring people into the city that have a professional background that can bring work into the city. Need to start staying on the agenda, things need to be brought to the forefront on Wednesdays and arguments need to be done then instead of at the Commission meetings, need to stop grandstanding, come together and make the city goal. Once a tax base is built, we can start growing and have money come in. Let's work together to make the city like it should be, like it was years ago.

Michael Brown, Captain of the State Police, in charge of the Southwest Region stated it was their privilege to assist the BHPD. Highlighted some things that were pleasing to him in 2022, the supervisors have had almost 2500 citizens contacts, very few citizen complaints. He's pleased with the activity and partnership with BHPD and is happy with the momentum.

Mayor Muhammad allowed Captain Brown to go through some statistics, such as, March-Nov, 107 illegal handguns were seized in Benton Harbor, 2552 traffic stops, 99 fugitives arrested that had existing warrants, there were more drug arrests than in previous years, recovered 11 stolen vehicles, 16 weapons that were traced to other crimes in Michigan and Indiana, 19 stolen firearms, recovered 4 fully automatic firearms. \$5000 was donated to the Benton Harbor Little League through one of the Michigan Police charities.

Clerk Moore read written comments from Shaquille Turner: The City of Benton Harbor was granted thousands of dollars to purchase residents PPE during the Pandemic. On March 27, 2020, the CARES Act was signed into law to assist communities in their efforts to prevent, prepare for and

respond to the COVID19 pandemic. Is there a list that shows where the face masks, hand sanitizer, etc went? Many of the residents within Benton Harbor never received it. A few months ago, I emailed the full body as well as the city manager pictures of Public Works dumpin within the City limits. What was the outcome? Has the full body come up with an action plan for 2023 on how to address illegal dumping? I'm not just talking about the cameras, but what action? According to the City Mayor, when the City opened the city chamber back up, he stated that IF the residents had questions and or concerns to email or phone the city manager. However, that's a lie. What's the next option the residents should take? I would like to have my questions answered. Thanks.

A resident of Harbor Towners described how power was lost and the building flooded, she spoke with several people for help. The water was then shut off and her family couldn't have Christmas. She was treated bad by Ms. Hill. Seemed like nobody cared about them. Mayor Muhammad responded that the inspection department is working with the City Manager's office and HUD to work on inspection and examinations. He yielded to Director McGinnis for an update. McGinnis stated the department has documentation that goes back several years with Harbor Towers. When they were met with resistance, HUD was contacted who met with the Housing Commission, a plan is being put in place on what HUD is telling them they have to do with the residents.

CONSENT CALENDAR

A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Singleton to APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR. Motion carried on a unanimous roll call vote.
Consent Calendar Items Include:

APPROVAL OF THE 117TH BLOSSOMTIME FESTIVAL GRAND FLORAL PARADE AND RUN/WALK FOR THE BUDS

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE A CONTRACT WITH NEXTREQUEST FOR RECORDS REQUEST SOFTWARE

COMMUNICATIONS

Director McGinnis stated that Chat with the Chief is going to move so those who work during the day can join. He announced the Public Safety Department being awarded at \$15,000 grant for a special washer and dryer for fire gear.

Assessor Story – No Report

Director Williams made a statement regarding the false story reported about the City regarding ARPA funds. After research he indeed found out that the information in the story was incorrect.

Clerk Moore – No Report

Manager Mitchell stated this is a serious matter at Harbor Towers and it's not being left to the Housing Commission or anyone. HUD has come in for a meeting, we're not going to just sit back.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Clark-Griffin stated she's feeling real good and healthy, she is celebrating her 1 year anniversary as 4th Ward Commissioner and putting the year in review, positive things happened in the 4th Ward, such as the Resource Fair, Prayer Walk, Clean Up, Senior Care package and Toy giveaway. There are a lot of great thing coming for her Ward and the Community.

Commissioner Henry stated this is our time, there's a lot of money flowing down to us, we need to put ourselves, as residents, in position. As long as elected officials do the right thing, our kids and grandkids will appreciate it, if not, they will look back and ask us why. She's very optimistic of what is going to happen. She spoke on Kwanzaa and keeping the tradition going with the Benton Harbor African Arts & Culture, and the principles of Kwanzaa taking the nation in the right way.

Commissioner Edwards stated whatever success he's done or how he's helped someone, he gives to God. He spoke on being a speaker for people and how he's the speaker for his residence and won't leave until the last person is out.

Commissioner Henderson stated it's good to hear there will be real movement with Harbor Towers and there's a lot of great projects and events that will be happening for the community. We are not where we once were and are far done with the community of Benton Harbor.

Commissioner Adams stated she looked into the Homeowners Assistance program and it is not as easy as it sounds. She wants to know if there was a particular place to scan and upload documents and learned there wasn't one in Berrien County, that is needed for residents to be able to easily apply for something like this. Harbor Towers needs to be deemed a state of emergency, some people have no choice but to live there.

Commissioner Isom stated we must help the people in Harbor Towers to live better. Expect Great Things, something is going to happen. Expect Great Things to happen in Benton Harbor education, health, jobs, lead line repairs, things are happening in the City.

Commissioner Singleton thanked the resident at Harbor Towers for her testimony, it won't go in vain. He thanked Captain Brown for the report and service that the guys are doing. Has made some efforts to get the truth out there when bad news comes out.

Mayor Pro Tem Seats said there has always been complaints about Harbor Towers and the way tenants have been treated. The elevators have not been working for years. That building has been a travesty for years, the body has known, the landlords that have been enacted on these boards aren't doing what their supposed to do, they have not been restrained or corrected. What are we going to do now, what's next, how are they going to be empowered to do what they need to do.

Mayor Muhammad stated that although the saga and story of Harbor Towers has come to a breaking point and many people have suffered over the years, there is a good God and he is going to take a situation that is terrible, he is going to make something good out of it. There are some things in the works and discussion on the building moving forward. He was honored to be one of the Governor's guests at her inauguration. We accept the apology of the Michigan Capitol Confidential, who is supposed to be the watchdog for corruption in the State of Michigan, only to find out that every penny, dime and nickel was and is accounted for and all reports have been filed and sent to the federal government. There will be a report of the ARPA funds at the Personnel & Finance Committee meeting and will be placed on the website.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Edwards to adjourn the meeting was carried on a unanimous roll call vote.

The regular meeting was adjourned by Mayor Muhammad at 9:57pm.

Tiffany Moore, City Clerk

Marcus Muhammad, Mayor