

City of Mansfield
MINUTES OF *REGULAR* PUBLIC MEETING
September 27, 2021

In-Person Council Meeting

The Board of Aldermen met in *regular* session on **September 27th**, in Mansfield City Hall located at 705 Polk Street. Mayor John H. Mayweather, Sr. called this meeting to order at **4:30 p.m.**, after which an Invocation was offered by **Alderman Mitchell L. Lewis**. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by **Alderman Joseph Hall, Jr.** Following the pledge, the roll call was suspended. However the following officials were recorded as in attendance at this regular meeting of the city council. **Present:** Hon. John H. Mayweather, Sr., -**Mayor**, Mary J. Green – District **A**, Mitchell L. Lewis –District **C**, Joseph Hall, Jr. –District **D**, and Kervin D. Campbell – District **E**. **Absent:** Christopher S. Thomas –District **B**. **City Hall Personnel & Dept. Heads Present:** Marvin Jackson (Clerk), Gwendolyn Jones (Deputy Clerk), Tommie Crawford (Public Relations Officer), Theresa Zamarripa (Billing Clerk), Melony McCarty (Accountant), Annette Blue (Police Chief) and Billy Locke (Asst. Police Chief). **Other City Personnel Present:** 19 city employees present from various departments. Others Present: John Barr (Regional Director in U.S. Senator John Kennedy’s office) and Chassidy Robinson. **Press Present:** None.

It was MOTIONED by **KERVIN D. CAMPBELL** and SECONDED by **JOSEPH HALL, JR.** to approve the minutes of the **August 23, 2021 *regular*** City Council meeting and dispense with the reading. Motion Passed Unanimously. (The September 13, 2021 regular meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 quarantine of the City Clerk).

The City Clerk next opened the floor to hear public comments from those in attendance, to any item outlined on the meeting agenda. Police officers Jeffrey Walker and Joshua Schenck both stood individually to voice their displeasure at the current rate of pay for law enforcement personnel in the Police Department. Captain Bryan Ross of the Fire Department echoed similar sentiments regarding their current rate of pay being inadequate. Walker also expressed his discontent over how the City is disbursing COVID-19 ‘premium pay’ to employees who continued working during the pandemic. He was of the opinion that all city employees having worked during the covered period should receive the same amount of premium pay. The City’s disbursement plan proposed prorating the premium pay to ‘essential workers’ for the period from 04/01/2020 through 03/31/2021, based on their date of hire and actual time worked during this period. No employee hired after April 1, 2021 would be eligible to receive any COVID premium pay for the covered period. The proration would be determined based on an average of 40 hours per work week for all full-time employees. For part-time employees, the amount would be prorated based on the employee’s date of hire and actual time worked during the period of April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021. Further, an employee must be an “active” employee on the disbursement date to qualify for this special compensation and must be considered an “essential worker”. Essential workers are defined by the American Rescue Plan Act to include, among others, janitors, sanitation workers, public health and safety staff and support staff. When no further public comments were offered from any of the attendees at this meeting, the **Public Comments Period** was then subsequently closed.

Old Business:

Item A: It was MOTIONED by **JOSEPH HALL, JR.** and SECONDED by **MITCHELL L. LEWIS** to authorize the Mayor to enter into and execute a Construction Contract with *Suncoast Infrastructure, Inc.* as the lowest responsible bidder in the amount of **\$583,488.66** for performance of improvements to the city's Wastewater Collection System. Construction activities are scheduled to commence on October 25, 2021 and is anticipated to be completed in approximately 120 days. However, it should be noted that since we are about to enter the fall season, inclement weather could be a factor as to exactly when the project will be completed. In other words, the duration of this project could exceed the estimated 120 days allotted for its completion. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Item B: It was MOTIONED by **KERVIN D. CAMPBELL** and SECONDED by **MITCHELL L. LEWIS** to authorize the Mayor to enter into and execute a Construction Contract with *Axis Construction, LLC* as the lowest responsible bidder in the total amount of **\$827,000.00** for performance of improvements to the city's Wastewater Treatment Facility, to include the total base bid of \$773,000, Additive Alternate No. 1 for \$32,000 and Additive Alternate No. 2 for \$22,000. As of this meeting, a commencement date and completion date had not been determined. This information will be provided to the City once a Pre-Construction Conference with the contractor (*Axis Construction*) has been held. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Item C: No other old business.

New Business:

Item A: **Ordinance No. 4 of 2021** was introduced, drafted to **amend** the City's Annual Financial Budget for fiscal year **2021**. The action required at this meeting was authorization to publish the title of **Ordinance** in the City's official municipal journal (*The Enterprise & Interstate Progress*) and set a public hearing on same for the next regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen. The **Ordinance** was prepared to account for the funds received from the *Office of Community Development* as a result of the creation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The amount of \$855,098.68 (one half of the total amount appropriated to the City – approximately 1.7 million appropriated) was received in late August of this year. The remaining half of the appropriation is expected to be disbursed to the City within the next 12 months. The **Ordinance** reflected how the \$855,098.68 was allocated to allow for the disbursement of COVID-19 premium pay to 'essential workers', including related employee benefits, a 2021 loss revenue calculation, infrastructure expenses, and other COVID-related expenses. Prior to taking action to authorize advertisement of the title of the **Ordinance** and set a public hearing, Aldermen Hall requested that the accountant provide a line-by-line account of the proposed disbursements reflected on the Budget Amendment document. The city's accountant, Melony

McCarty, was seated at the rear of the foyer due to limited seating in the council meeting room. She was asked to come forward and provide a detailed, oral summary of the proposed Budget Amendment disbursements. It should be mentioned that Alderman Hall used a hostile, aggressive tone in requesting the information he sought. As the accountant was preparing to provide an overview of the budget amendment document, Alderman Hall began a series of rapid-fire inquiries all related to information contained in the document. When he failed to pause to allow the accountant an opportunity to provide the explanations he requested, the accountant became visibly agitated, after which she abruptly left the room and never returned. After the accountant's departure from the room, Alderman Hall immediately motioned for her termination, with Alderwoman Green offering a second to the motion. However, the Mayor did not call for the motion to be carried as this is not the process by which an employee is terminated from the City's employ. An employee, other than a department head or employee of the police department, can be dismissed only after approval of the Mayor. The clerk later attempted to answer some of the council's inquiries regarding the proposed Budget Amendment. Though, he too was met with some degree of hostility from some members of the City Council. Alderwoman Green stated that she would not vote in favor of adopting this **Ordinance** as presented. She instead requested that the Budget Amendment be revised to allocate more funds to capital expenditures for the fire and police departments. The Clerk explained that language in the American Rescue Plan Act is very specific in communicating to recipients of the funds, the permitted uses of this appropriation. In conclusion, no action was taken to authorize advertisement of the title of the **Ordinance** or to set a public hearing on same. This matter will have to be tabled until either a special council meeting is called or it can be further discussed at a regular meeting.

Item B: It was MOTIONED by **MARY J. GREEN** and SECONDED by **MITCHELL L. LEWIS** to approve the proposed guidelines drafted for disbursement of COVID-19 premium pay to all "active" city employees for the 12-month period commencing April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021, who are considered "essential workers". Both full-time and part-time "active" employees are subject to receive this special compensation. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Item C: No other new business discussed.

During comments for the Mayor and Council members, the council members expressed a desire to meet with the department heads as they draft their list of capital expenditures vital to continuing the day-to-day operations in their various departments. Once completed, their list of requested capital expenditures will be presented to the Mayor to be considered for inclusion in the city's 2022 Financial Budget.

John H. Mayweather, Sr., Mayor
Marvin R. Jackson, Clerk