

City of Mansfield
MINUTES OF *REGULAR* PUBLIC MEETING
August 8, 2022

The Board of Aldermen met in *regular* session on **August 8th**, in Mansfield City Hall located at 705 Polk Street. Mayor Thomas Jones, Jr. called this meeting to order at **4:30 p.m.**, after which an Invocation was offered by **Alderswoman Victoria W. Jackson**. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by **Alderman Antonio G. Washington**. 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. Thomas Jones, Jr., -**Mayor**, Mary J. Green –District **A**, Christopher S. Thomas –District **B**, Victoria W. Jackson –District **C**, Antonio G. Washington –District **D** and Rita J. Myles –District **E**. **Absent:** None. **City Hall Personnel, Dept. Heads, & Other City Personnel Present:** Gwendolyn Jones (Deputy Clerk), Annette Blue (Police Chief), Billy Locke (Asst. Police Chief), Bryan Ross (Fire Chief), Christopher Samuels (Fire Dept.), Joshua Ryals (Public Works Director) and William Bradford, (City Attorney). **Others Present:** 6 guests. **Press Present:** None.

It was MOTIONED by **RITA J. MYLES** and SECONDED by **CHRISTOPHER S. THOMAS** to approve the minutes of the **July 25, 2022 *regular*** City Council meeting and dispense with the reading. Motion Passed Unanimously.

The City Clerk next opened the floor to hear public comments from those in attendance, to any item outlined on the meeting agenda. When no comments were voiced from any of the attendees at this meeting, the **Public Comments Period** was then subsequently closed.

Old Business:

Item A: It was MOTIONED by **RITA J. MYLES** and SECONDED by **ANTONIO G. WASHINGTON** to approve a recommendation from the Mayor to take no action at this time on the proposed land exchange between Mr. Riemer Calhoun, Jr. and the City of Mansfield. The Mayor has had several conversations with Mr. Calhoun about some of the city's concerns regarding the exchange. This matter may possibly be deliberated further at a later date. The five-acre tract donated to the city by Mr. Calhoun in May 2009 is rectangular in shape, located directly behind the Highway 509 Mansfield Walmart SuperCenter store, and is located inside the city's corporate limits. It is being considered for exchange for a 4.7 acre parcel, irregular in shape, and located on the east side of Gilbert Lane, just south of U.S. Highway 84. The 5-acre parcel is connected to public facilities and is zoned in a B-3 Commercial District. It was originally proposed to be developed as a public park with an athletic field. Conversely, the 4.7-acre tract is located outside the city's corporate limits and is not zoned. It was determined, however, to be equal in value to the 5-acre tract. Still the Mayor and some members of the city council expressed concern over the 4.7-acre parcel not being in the city's jurisdiction. If the city opted to accept the land exchange and later planned to develop the 4.7-acre parcel, they would have to seek permission from another taxing authority to do so. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Item B: The City-Wide Broadband Community Assessment Feasibility Study which commenced in November 2021, drafted in April 2022 and presented to the city council at that

time, was approved by a three-to-two vote. Alderwomen **Mary Green, Victoria Jackson** and **Rita Myles** voted to approve/accept the Feasibility Study; while Aldermen **Christopher Thomas** and **Antonio Washington** voted in opposition of approving the Study. The Feasibility Study was conducted in connection to a proposed Municipal Fiber Broadband Network buildout. Alderman **Thomas** recalled that the current municipal advisor (Lucius McGehee of *Argent Advisors, Inc.*) requested additional financial data from *LA Connected* that has yet to be provided. He was also concerned that the city may not qualify for certain grants being touted as being available to municipalities for broadband network buildout. Alderman **Washington** stated that he would like the city to explore all options with regard to partnering with a company to assist with the launching of the proposed broadband project. Instead he said it appears that we have partnered with *LA Connected* with no consideration for exploring other companies who may also have expertise with this type endeavor. He concluded by stating that since the cost associated with the Study had been fully satisfied, he didn't see why it was necessary to accept/approve it. It was MOTIONED by **MARY J. GREEN** and SECONDED by **RITA J. MYLES** to approve the Community Assessment & Feasibility Study as drafted and presented. As mentioned, **VICTORIA W. JACKSON** voiced a Yea vote for the approval of the Study, while **Christopher Thomas** and **Antonio Washington** both voted Nay on this issue.

Item C: No other old business.

New Business:

Item A: A discussion of offering short-term disability to all full-time employees ensued. At renewal of our health insurance coverage on October 1st, the city will be switching insurance providers from *HUMANA* to *Blue Cross and Blue Shield of LA*. The substantial savings in premium realized from the swap, for the first time in the city's history, is allowing the city to offer this benefit to its full-time employees at the city's expense. Employees filing for short-time disability will receive 60% of their salary up to \$500 weekly, commencing after the 8th day of disability. Employees can claim disability benefits for up to twelve (12) weeks.

Item B: A Statement of Revenue & Expenditures for the period 01/01/22 through 07/31/22 for the Corporation General Fund, Waterworks Fund, and Sewer Fund was presented to the Mayor and Council for their perusal. The financial data was provided to the Council in two formats—in an expanded format and in a condensed version. This data is being provided monthly to the Council so that they are informed as to the current financial health of each department individually and the city as a whole. No action is necessary on this monthly report.

Item C: The newly appointed city attorney, Mr. **William C. Bradford, Jr.** stood to introduce to the Council, the municipal advisor being considered to replace the current advisor. Ms. **Pamela**

Mobley of the firm *RSI Group, LLC*, a women-owned municipal counseling company, was present to share with the Council an abridged version of the services her company offers. Her company is being considered to replace the current municipal advisor, *Argent Advisors, Inc.* (Ruston, LA). The city's engagement with *Argent* will be terminated and this new firm employed to assist with navigating the financial funding of the broadband buildout, should the City opt to proceed with this venture. This company has offices in Louisiana, but is headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas, with additional offices in Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia and Texas. The *RSI Group* is an independent municipal advisory firm that provides balanced, independent evaluations of potential financing to state and local governments. Even more specifically, this firm provides services that facilitate debt issuance from structuring to closing. Ms. **Mobley** rose to state that she has nearly 30 years of experience with this type of consulting work. The Mayor requested that *RSI Group* be placed on the next agenda to proposed engaging this firm as the city's new municipal advisor.

Item D: During comments offered by the Mayor, he shared with the Council and all attendees, a benefit he learned about for qualifying low-income consumers...the *Affordable Connectivity Program* (ACP). The ACP provides a monthly internet service discount and a one-time connected device benefit from participating internet companies. This program is offered through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). If a household qualifies, they can receive a monthly ACP benefit of up to \$30 to cover the cost of their internet service and up to \$75 for qualifying households on Tribal lands. Through this program, a household's internet company may also offer a one-time internet connected device benefit of up to \$100 for a computer, tablet, or laptop with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50. The Mayor also provided a few blank application forms and agreements for this program to those in attendance. In closing out his comments, he stated that the city attorney (William Bradford) will soon begin reviewing select Ordinances in the city's Code of Ordinances to assist with amending those that are in need of revisions. Finally, the attorney will also present legislation to the Council on the proposed Mayor's Outreach Fund, as well as some other funds, in an effort to promote transparency.

Item E: No other new business discussed.

With no further business to discuss, this meeting was declared adjourned at **5:16 p.m.** by MOTION from **VICTORIA W. JACKSON** and was SECONDED by **ANTONIO G. WASHINGTON**. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Thomas Jones, Jr., Mayor
Marvin R. Jackson, Clerk