

**MINUTES OF THE BENTON HARBOR CITY COMMISSION MEETING
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS
SEPTEMBER 8, 2015**

The regular meeting of the Benton Harbor City Commission was called to order by Mayor Hightower at 7:03 p.m. Invocation was given by Ruthie Haralson, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call showed the following members present: Commissioners Adams, Isom, Haralson, Henry, Muhammad, Seats and Mayor Hightower. Members Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Henderson and Commissioner Jones. Also present: City Manager Watson (arrived at 7:06 p.m.) and City Clerk Thompson.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Muhammad and supported by Commissioner Haralson to approve the agenda as presented **carried** unanimously on the roll call vote.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 17, 2015

A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Commissioner Muhammad to approve the Regular Minutes of August 17, 2015 with any necessary corrections or deletions. The motion **carried** on the following roll call vote. Yeas: Commissioners Haralson, Isom, Henry, Seats, Adams and Muhammad. Nays: None. Members Abstain: Mayor Hightower. Members Absent: Commissioner Jones and Mayor Pro-Tem Henderson.

UPDATE – COUNTY COMMISSIONER YARBROUGH

County Commissioner Yarbrough gave information on the upcoming Berrien County Property Tax Sale scheduled for September 15th and Project Resiliency event. She said that the County is looking to create an Indigent Defense Department and reviewing everything with the Animal Control. She gave an update on the Mercy Center. She encouraged the City Commission to appoint someone to the Library Board.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Corey Hampton, founder of Yahweh Productions, solicited for donations to help showcase his stage play in San Antonio, Texas.

Jerry Edwards on behalf of the Bracken Edwards Youth Organization Umbrella (B.E.Y.O.U.), reported on his summer youth basketball tournament and thanked sponsors for their help. He asked for permission to make upgrades to the park with no assistance from the City.

Emanuel Shepherd, representative of B.E.Y.O.U., requested the use of the Armory for the youth.

De'Andre Taylor, stated that he plans to coach football to the youth through the B.E.Y.O.U.

Fred Glespie stated that he plans to help train boxing to the youth through the B.E.Y.O.U.

Ms. Yolanda Smith, representative of B.E.Y.O.U., expressed a need for assistance with the youth in the organization.

Xavier Haynes, participant of B.E.Y.O.U., expressed support for the organization and stated that the programs should be offered all year round.

Malcolm Haynes, participant of B.E.Y.O.U., requested the use of the Armory for the organization.

Michael Hoyh requested honorable recognition for well renowned sculptor Richard Hunt as he celebrates his 80th birthday. He invited everyone to his open house celebration scheduled for Saturday, September 12th.

Peter Colovos on behalf of Project Resiliency, thanked the City Commission and invited everyone to attend the dedication and unveiling of the plaza scheduled for Friday, September 11th at 10:00 a.m.

Emma Kinnard of 270 E. May Street reported on a wonderful year for the Fresh Start Garden and stated that she's focusing on the greenhouse in Benton Township. She urged everyone to continue encouraging the youth in the community.

Abisayo Muhammad, on behalf of the Local Organizing Committee of the Million Man March, extended an invitation to all for the upcoming march in Washington D.C. to demand justice of the government.

James Duncan expressed support for the youth and things that they are requesting such as a gymnasium. He stated that the bushes at Yarbrough Park need to be cut again.

CONSENT CALENDAR

The following Consent Calendar items were presented by City Manager Watson, moved by Commissioner Muhammad and supported by Commissioner Adams carried unanimously on the roll call vote.

RESOLUTIONS:

ADOPT A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPOINTMENT TO THE CEMETERY BOARD
(AUDREY PRINGLE)

ADOPT A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF REVIEW
(RON SINGLETON)

ADOPT A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPOINTMENT TO THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
(COMMISSIONER ISOM)

COMMUNICATIONS

City Manager Watson informed the City Commission of the free training for the Brownfield Redevelopment and the employment status of Assistant City Manager / Community and Economic Development Director Farrow. He reminded everyone that the Cherry and Summit project will commence on September 14th. He stated that the Snow Removal and Frozen Water Lines plans will be available to the public by October 15th. He urged all to contact the City to remove dead carcass. He said that there has been great interest in the Armory and more information is forthcoming. He stated that the City will have a tribute ready for Mr. Hunt on Friday.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Adams thanked residents for attending tonight's meeting and commended various people for their efforts in the community. She extended words of encouragement to the youth and stated that hopefully, the Armory will be back open for them. She expressed a need for a garden in each ward. She encouraged everyone to get registered to vote and said that the City needs greater change.

Commissioner Seats thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting and commended the young men for being articulate in stating their purpose for being here. He directed them to go to the Parks Conservancy meeting to demand their requests. He endorsed Commissioners Muhammad and Adams for the upcoming election and encouraged everyone to do the same. He expressed opposition to the Parks Conservancy and actions that he said were done by the Mayor prior to the Primary Election.

Commissioner Henry thanked residents for attending tonight's meeting. She requested for the City Commission to have a copy of the Frozen Water Lines plan prior to disseminating to the public as well as more information on the free Brownfield training. She thanked County Commissioner Yarbrough for her updates. She said that the City Commission will have more control on what is done with funds in 2016

and encouraged residents to continue giving their input. She said that the upcoming election will prove that they're all in this together for the people of Benton Harbor.

Commissioner Muhammad thanked residents for attending tonight's meeting and commended various people for their efforts in the community. He reported on the success of the community garden and first day of school for Benton Harbor Area Schools. He spoke on the dedication of a renovated park in Dowagiac and stated that he hopes that there is some break through with Union Park. He commended City Manager Watson for addressing the water issues on Thresher and stated that hopefully the City will be able to get to other streets and areas to repair water leaks before the winter season.

Commissioner Isom thanked the residents for attending tonight's meeting as well as the City Commission for appointing him as Vice-Chair of the Legislative Committee. He commended the youth and Ms. Kinnard for their efforts in the community. He spoke on youth development and stated that hopefully the park will be ready for them soon. He assured everyone that he will do everything possible so that residents are able to have a better quality of life.

Commissioner Haralson thanked citizens for attending tonight's meeting and commended various people for their efforts in the community. She said that hopefully the youth will be able to get things that they're requesting. She requested to have the sign for Hall Park posted. She encouraged all to attend the Project Resiliency event. She expressed concerns with water bills.

Mayor Hightower thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting and commended various people for their efforts in the community. He reported on the improvements done to Hall Park and stated that there is more work to be done. He gave an update on Union Park. He urged all to attend the Project Resiliency event on Friday. He spoke on the Mercy Center and the atrocious upkeep of it. He said that Wolf Development has been ticketed for those violations; however, the problem is that the City ordinances hold no weight. He suggested rescinding the ordinance done by former Emergency Manager Harris that stifled ordinances. He informed everyone that there will be a meeting scheduled soon to address water concerns.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.



 Kimberly Thompson, City Clerk



 James Hightower, Mayor