

**MINUTES OF THE BENTON HARBOR CITY COMMISSION MEETING
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS
FEBRUARY 16, 2016**

The regular meeting of the Benton Harbor City Commission was called to order by Mayor Muhammad at 7:10 p.m. Invocation was given by Reverend Childs, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call showed the following members present: Commissioners Adams, Haralson, Henry, Mayor Pro-Tem Seats and Mayor Muhammad. Members Absent: Commissioners Henderson, Jones (arrived at 7:17 p.m.) and Joseph. Also present: City Manager Watson (arrived at 7:20 p.m.) and City Clerk Thompson.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Seats to suspend Items # 1 and 2 on page 7 of the Council Rules/Policies & Procedures; and remove Consent Calendar Items (ADOPT RESOLUTIONS APPROVING THE DEMOLITION LIST FOR BERRIEN COUNTY AND THE AMENDMENT TO THE BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN - PRAIRIE REDEVELOPMENT ARTS DISTRICT PROJECT from the Consent Calendar and entertaining them as separate resolutions carried unanimously on the roll call vote.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – FEBRUARY 1, 2016

A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Seats and supported by Commissioner Adams to approve the Regular Minutes of February 1, 2016 with any necessary corrections or deletions. The motion carried unanimously on the roll call vote.

UPDATE – COUNTY COMMISSIONER YARBROUGH

County Commissioner Yarbrough thanked the City Commission for appointing Edward Isom to the Library Board and gave information on the Library's Family Book Club. She reported on the delinquent properties in Berrien County and informed all that County Treasurer Witkowski will be at the Library on Saturday, February 27th from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for those interested in making payment arrangements on back taxes.

PRESENTATION – NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN (N.A.M.)

Marian Barrera-Young, President of NAM, gave background information on the organization, its purpose in the community and ways to fund it. She explained that they provide technical assistance at no charge; however, they must be invited to do so. She solicited for funds to help those interested attend conferences.

Commissioner Adams suggested utilizing the organization to help strengthen Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust (ALPACT) and rebuild the neighborhood block clubs.

Mayor Pro-Tem Seats asked for clarity on the request for funds.

Dr. Maxie Jackson, Secretary of NAM and Michigan State University Faculty Member, clarified that they are asking for funds to support the administration of the organization; not for the technical assistance that could be provided.

Mayor Muhammad acknowledged board members, John Thomas and Richard Alexander and thanked everyone for the presentation.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Sherman Reed, Office Manager for the local Department of Agricultural Natural Resources Conservation Service, gave an overview of the programs that they provide to help preserve land. He announced that the district is honoring Ms. Kinnard this Thursday with the Friends of Conservation Award for the Fresh Start garden.

Emma Kinnard of 270 E. May Street thanked Mr. Reed for his assistance with the Fresh Start garden and encouraged all to participate with it. She expressed safety concerns with the street lights being out on May Street.

Attorney Elizabeth McCree of 107 Water Street announced an Expungement Fair for Saturday, March 5, 2016 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Benton Harbor High School.

CONSENT CALENDAR

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

RESOLUTIONS:

ADOPT A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE RESIGNATION OF COMMISSIONER BRYAN JOSEPH;

ADOPT A RESOLUTION OF ACTIONS TO CORRECT FINDINGS INCLUDED IN FISCAL YEAR 2015 AUDIT

SEPARATED RESOLUTIONS

After discussion, a motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Seats and supported by Commissioner Adams to **ADOPT A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE DEMOLITION LIST FOR BERRIEN COUNTY** carried unanimously on the roll call vote.

After discussion, a motion made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Seats to **ADOPT A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE AMENDMENT TO THE BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (PRAIRIE REDEVELOPMENT ARTS DISTRICT PROJECT)** carried unanimously on the roll call vote. *(Please note – City Manager Watson stated that the building in question was used as a Federal Internal Revenue Service and Post Office; both federal agencies. Mayor Pro-Tem Seats stated that Mark Florian disclosed at a committee meeting that he is Brownfield's Technical Consultant and will also work for Prairie Development).*

Members of the City Commission expressed concerns with the time it will take to have representation to fill the Commissioner-at-large seat vacated by former Commissioner Joseph. There was a discussion on a proposed timeline to address it. As a result, the City Commission set the deadline of February 23, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. for applicants to submit applications and called a Special City Commission meeting for Monday, February 29th to conduct the interviews. The Commission also requested for the Receivership Transitional Advisory Board (RTAB) to reschedule its next meeting to accommodate the affirmation of this appointment.

COMMUNICATIONS

City Clerk Thompson announced the deadline to apply for the Commissioner-at-large vacancy is Tuesday, February 23, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. at the City Clerk's Office.

City Manager Watson stated that the Commissioner-at-large appointee will serve until the August 2017 municipal election; at such time, those interested will have to run for office to serve the duration of the term.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Haralson thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting to see their government in action.

Commissioner Henry thanked citizens for attending tonight's meeting. She encouraged those interested to get involved with the standing committees.

Commissioner Jones thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. He congratulated Ms. Kinnard and expressed appreciation to Attorney McCree for her efforts. He stated that Mr. Reed's proposal is very much needed and suggested for him to give a presentation to the schools on it. He spoke on the Forestry program and the employment opportunities through it.

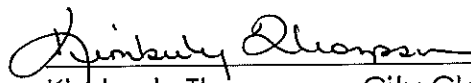
Commissioner Adams thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. She said that she's amazed at the things that are coming forward and briefly spoke on Manchester Bidwell Arts and Technology Center. She expressed appreciation for Ms. Kinnard and said that they must find ways to make children eat healthier. She also spoke on federal tax credits. She said that she's full of hope and holding on to faith.

Mayor Pro-Tem Seats thanked Mayor Muhammad for his leadership. He read quotes in honor of Black History month. He spoke on the City's experience with an emergency manager and expressed great concerns for Flint.

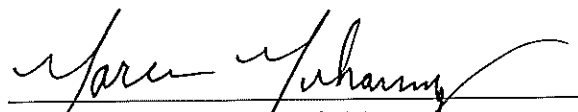
Mayor Muhammad thanked residents for attending tonight's meeting, County Commissioner Yarbrough for her updates and the standing committees for their due diligence. He commended City Manager Watson on plowing efforts during this winter season. He vowed to take care of the City's business for residents. He announced the March 8, 2016 Presidential Primary Election and acknowledged the important ballot initiative for Benton Harbor Area Schools.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.



Kimberly Thompson, City Clerk



Marcus Muhammad, Mayor