

**MINUTES OF THE BENTON HARBOR CITY COMMISSION MEETING
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS
MARCH 21, 2016**

The regular meeting of the Benton Harbor City Commission was called to order by Mayor Muhammad at 7:02 p.m. Invocation was given by a local pastor, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call showed the following members present: Commissioners Adams, Haralson, Henderson, Henry, Isom, Mayor Pro-Tem Seats, Commissioner Singleton and Mayor Muhammad. Members Absent: Commissioner Jones. Also present: City Manager Watson and Deputy City Clerk Osler.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Adams and supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Seats to approve the agenda as presented carried unanimously on the roll call vote.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – MARCH 7, 2016

A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Seats and supported by Commissioner Haralson to approve the Regular Minutes of March 7, 2016 with any necessary corrections or deletions. The motion carried unanimously on the roll call vote.

UPDATE – COUNTY COMMISSIONER YARBROUGH

County Commissioner Yarbrough gave background history on the County's newly hired Indigent Defender. She spoke on the 54 properties in the City that were recently sold and encouraged support for the development of them.

PRESENTATION – MICHIGAN'S MISS BASKETBALL / KYSRE GONDREZICK

Mayor Muhammad presented a Key to the City to Michigan's Miss Basketball, Kysre Gondrezick, for her many accomplishments as a student athlete at the Benton Harbor High School.

Members of the City Commission gave accolades to Miss Gondrezick and wished her the best of luck for all future endeavors. They also acknowledged the support of her family.

Miss Gondrezick thanked everyone for the recognition and support. She spoke on her journey and stated that she wanted Benton Harbor to be great.

Felecia Harvey-Gondrezick, mother of Kysre Gondrezick and Benton Harbor High School's Varsity Girls Coach, spoke on Tiger pride and affinity for the community. She stated that she is so proud of her daughter's accomplishments. She thanked everyone for this prestigious recognition and Mayor (Coach) Muhammad for his efforts.

****Please note – Miss Gondrezick received this award in the presence of Reinaldo Tripplett, Principal of the Benton Harbor High School; Sharon Tripplett-James, President of the Benton Harbor Area Schools Board; James F.A. Turner, Treasurer of the Benton Harbor Area Schools Board and family members.****

VETERAN'S PRESENTATION

Christopher Thomas, representative from the Department of Veterans Affairs, reported on the homeless veterans in Berrien County and announced that there will be 25 vouchers coming to the area for them.

Mayor Muhammad stated that this is an initiative that First Lady Obama has tackled in support of President Obama, where housing is provided. He said that this is a start that will hopefully lead to a facility being built in the City for all.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

Michael Hoyh reported on his visit to Detroit to attend the Michigan Historical Preservation Network. He spoke on House Bill 52-32 and invited all to look into it.

Jerry Edwards congratulated Miss Gondrezick and the newly appointed members of the City Commission. He gave details of the summer three-on-three basketball tournament. He thanked everyone for their support.

Greg Vaughn stated that Miss Gondrezick is an inspiration to everyone in the community. He spoke on the 2016 Senior PGA and invited all to participate at the events. He thanked Mayor Muhammad and City staff for their support.

Jerry Price stated that the community sees potential in Miss Gondrezick. He gave an overview of the series of events planned for the 2016 Senior PGA.

Mayor Muhammad invited Mr. Vaughn back to do a full presentation on the 2016 Senior PGA prior to the event.

Emma Kinnard stated that the City is making a full turnaround. She congratulated Miss Gondrezick and Coach Gondrezick for their efforts. She asked for an update on the funds allocated for the other community gardens and requested to do a presentation on them at a later date.

Patti Heinz stated that she's proud of Miss Gondrezick. She expressed concerns with lead in the water system and suggested doing testing throughout the City. She requested an investigation of Berrien County for a matter resulting in the death of a young man.

James F.A. Turner expressed appreciation for Miss Gondrezick. He thanked everyone for passing the Benton Harbor Area Schools District millage. He encouraged all to unite to save our City.

COMMUNICATIONS

- City Manager Watson congratulated Miss Gondrezick. He reminded everyone that leaf pick-up runs from April 1st to December 1st. He said that there will be departmental budget presentations at the next Personnel & Finance Committee meeting. He directed Ms. Kinnard to submit information relevant to the Fresh Start Garden to the Community & Economic Development Department. He invited those interested to visit the Water Plant to see its operation. He clarified that St. Joseph and Benton Township pulled out of the City's water system to hamstring this community.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Singleton stated that he's looking forward to addressing the business of the City. He spoke on his mother and the public service that she provided to the community.

Commissioner Isom thanked citizens for attending tonight's meeting. He said that there is an obligation to represent them and address their concerns. He spoke on the progression of various projects going on and encouraged everyone to get involved. He said that we have a beautiful City that needs to remain clean. He thanked County Commissioner Yarbrough for her efforts.

Commissioner Haralson thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting to see their government in action. She spoke on Miss Gondrezick's great representation in the community and thanked County Commissioner Yarbrough for her updates. She extended her support to Mr. Edwards for his involvement in the City and encouraged those interested in serving on boards to go see the City Clerk.

Commissioner Henry thanked residents for attending tonight's meeting. She expressed appreciation for having a full City Commission. She urged citizens to get involved in their government. She announced that information on the recall of Governor Snyder will be given on Thursday, at 6:00 p.m. at Dr. Tynes' office on Pipestone. She informed everyone that Harbor Shores and the Senior PGA are offering temporary employment for those interested.

Commissioner Henderson thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. She said that it's great to see a group of people who are just as concerned as the City Commission on things happening in the community. She commended others in attendance that have invested here. She said that citizen participation is the key and encouraged everyone to stay involved.

Commissioner Adams thanked residents for attending tonight's meeting. She congratulated the newly appointed members of the City Commission and Miss Gondrezick. She requested statistics on Berrien County arrests and electronic monitoring. She suggested for citizens to receive tax dollars from the development of former schools. She stated that she hopes the youth are able to get employment through cleaning up the community in preparation for the 2016 Senior PGA.

Mayor Pro-Tem Seats thanked residents for attending tonight's meeting. He said that he's seen this City Commission transform into something that could be monumental and great. He asked if a sign could be placed in the City acknowledging that this is the home of Miss Basketball for the State of Michigan. He commended Mayor Muhammad for his efforts and stated that every individual has been ordained to be here. He said that it's appalling for Governor Snyder to ask the City to pay a million dollars in legal fees and refuse to give financial assistance with the lawsuits. He said that we are going to a place that we've never been as a City.

Mayor Muhammad thanked the residents for attending tonight's meeting and acknowledged his family in the audience. He extended encouraging words to Miss Gondrezick. He commended City staff for their efforts of addressing potholes and encouraged residents to inform their Ward Commissioners of those that need attention. He thanked all stakeholders who have decided to make Benton Harbor their home as far as investment. He congratulated newly appointed members of the City Commission. He encouraged volunteering efforts to bring the City back.

OATH OF OFFICE


Deputy City Clerk Osler administered the oath of office to newly appointed Commissioner-At-Large Edward Isom and Ronald Singleton.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.



Kimberly Thompson, City Clerk



Marcus Muhammad, Mayor