

City of Mansfield
MINUTES OF *SPECIAL* PUBLIC MEETING
May 26, 2020

Via Teleconference

In a *special meeting* called pursuant to the provisions of R.S. 42:19, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen met on **Tuesday, May 26th** via *teleconference* due to the current State of Emergency, as a result of the **COVID-19** pandemic. Mayor John H. Mayweather, Sr. called the meeting to order at **4:30 p.m.**, after which an Invocation was offered by **Alderman Joseph Hall, Jr.** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by **Alderswoman Mary J. Green.** Following the pledge, the Clerk called the roll to record those council members participating and in attendance on this conference call. The following officials were recorded as **Present:** Hon. John H. Mayweather, Sr. –**Mayor**, Hon. Mary J. Green –**District A**, Hon. Christopher S. Thomas –**District B**, Hon. Mitchell L. Lewis –**District C**, Joseph Hall, Jr. –**District D** and Kervin D. Campbell –**District E.** **Absent:** None. **City Hall Personnel, Dept. Heads, & Other City Personnel Present:** Tommie Crawford (Public Relations Officer), Annette Blue (Police Chief), Billy Locke (Asst. Police Chief), and Latarsha Shelton (Fire Chief). **Others Present:** None. **Press Present:** None.

The City Clerk next opened the floor to hear public comments from the general public on any item reflected on the published meeting agenda. During the COVID-19 pandemic, interested citizens may offer public comments utilizing any one of the following means: via facsimile, via email or via telephone. Since no comments were offered by the use of any of the methods provided in the Procedures for Receiving Public Comments during the pandemic (posted on Friday, May 22nd), the **Public Comments Period** was then subsequently closed.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

Item A: It was MOTIONED by **MITCHELL L. LEWIS** and SECONDED by **CHRISTOPHER S. THOMAS** to approve the recommendation offered by Police Chief Annette Blue, to offer full-time employment to patrol officer **Za'Marcea T. Miles** with the Mansfield Police Department. Officer **Miles** was hired on April 8, 2019. Since his employment with the Department, officer **Miles** has completed the basic training academy as required, becoming P.O.S.T. (Peace Officer Standards Training) certified. Also officer **Miles** has proven that he is willing and able to follow the instructions given to him by his supervisors. Finally, officer **Miles** has demonstrated his ability to peacefully interact with the public and conduct himself in a professional manner. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Item B: At this time, proposed **Ordinance No. 3 of 2020** was introduced, drafted *amend* the Code of Ordinances of the City of Mansfield to increase the Water Rates; amending Section 21-53, requesting authorization to advertise the title of the Ordinance on 06/04/2020, and to set a public hearing on same for 06/08/2020. The proposal introduced was to request an increase of **\$4.00** to our water customer's monthly minimum bill (the 1st 2,000 gallons of water used). This would mean that for customers residing inside the city limits, their monthly minimum bill would

increase from \$20.00 per month to \$24.00 per month. Similarly, for customers residing outside the city limits, they would see an increase of their monthly minimum bill from \$22.00 per month to \$26.00 per month. The Clerk stated that historically user charges for water are reviewed every five (5) years or so. The last water rate increase was in 2015. This increase was being proposed because the Water Fund is currently operating at a deficit. Other governmental and proprietary funds of the City are also reflecting a significant decrease in revenues collected (i.e., sales taxes, ad valorem taxes, video poker revenue, fines and forfeitures, franchise fees and mineral royalties. The city's present financial condition was shared with the Aldermen in a letter addressed to each of them and included in their agenda packages. Additionally, the Mayor drafted and distributed a memo to all Department Heads instituting a hiring and wage freeze and a mandate to stop all unnecessary spending. The memo also mandated that all overtime be stopped or radically reduced. This was done earlier this month. However, presently it is the Water Fund that is experiencing the greatest financial strain. Current user charges are not sufficient enough to sustain the Water Fund. Our expenditures in this area are exceeding the revenues currently being collected. This deficit can largely be attributed to an increase in the cost of chemicals used to treat the water to make it potable for use and consumption. Also, the costs to maintain the equipment and appurtenances used produce and distribute potable water have drastically increased. These increases must be passed on to the users of these City's services. The Clerk explained that approving this measure is the only means to get the Water Fund back on more stable financial footing. Fee increases to other goods and services would not augment the Water Fund's cash flow position. Governmental activities (public safety, public works, sanitation, etc.) and business-type activities (water and sewer services) must be self-sustaining. Revenues collected from governmental activities cannot be transferred to the fund accounts of business-type activities when one or the other reflects a deficient. User charges for the good and services provided must be sufficient enough to support the functions of the respective funds (governmental and proprietary). The Council argued that because the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a negative impact on the local economy, it might now be a good time to increase water rates. However, the Clerk countered that the City was in a precarious position before the onslaught of the pandemic. We cannot let the pandemic dictate the course we should take to return the City's financial health to a better condition. Delaying approval of a water rate increase will only result in a greater deficit in the Water Fund. In conclusion, the Clerk stated that even after an increase in the water rate, our customers would not see the increase take effect until possibly their September billing. After a lengthy discussion of this matter, the Clerk called for individual votes from the Council. All five council members rendered nay votes on not moving forward with this proposal. It was MOTIONED by **CHRISTOPHER S. THOMAS** and SECONDED by **MARY J. GREEN** to table this matter and revisit it at a later date. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Item C: No other new business discussed.

During comments from the Mayor and Council Members, Fire Chief Latarsha Shelton announced that a local pastor (Rev. Jerius Marshall of *Gethsemane Baptist Church*) will host a 'movie night' event on Sunday, May 31st beginning at approximately 8:30 p.m. The venue chosen for this event will be the parking lot of the *DeSoto Plaza Shopping Center* on Washington Avenue (the former site of our Walmart SuperCenter store). This site is also the plaza where *Hancock Whitney Bank* and *Stage* department store is located. Pastor Marshall and organizers of the event have selected to show a family-friendly movie ("*Black Panther*"). The event is free to the public. Also, free popcorn and cold beverages will be provided. The church is accepting in-kind donations from local agencies, community leaders and individuals. It was mentioned that a few churches and/or other organizations in Shreveport, LA (Caddo parish) have hosted similar public events for the community-at-large as a form of entertainment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With no further business to discuss, this meeting was declared adjourned at **5:16 p.m.** by MOTION from **JOSEPH HALL, JR.** and was SECONDED by **MARY J. GREEN.** Motion Passed Unanimously.

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