



Founded 1821

**MAYOR**  
ROBERT E. SMITH, SR.

**CITY COUNCIL**  
GENE A. TAYLOR  
JOSEPH W. MICKENS, SR.  
CHARLIE BOX  
FRED E. STEWART  
KABIR KARRIEM  
BILL GAVIN

**CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER**  
DAVID ARMSTRONG

*Columbus*  
*Mississippi*

POST OFFICE BOX 1408  
COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI 39703  
(662) 328-7021 - OFFICE  
(662) 329-5173 - FAX

CFO/SECRETARY-TREASURER  
MIKE BERNSEN

POLICE CHIEF  
JOSEPH ST. JOHN

FIRE CHIEF  
THOMAS K. MOORE

DIRECTOR OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS  
GEORGE IRBY

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR  
PATRICIA MITCHELL

## **NOTICE OF**

### **SPECIAL MEETING(S) OF MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL** **August 19, 2009**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Mayor and City Council will have a special meeting for the purpose of holding a Special Work Session.

The meeting will be held at 8:00 a.m., August 19, 2009 at the City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Old Courtroom, 523 Main Street, Columbus, and may/will continue from day to day, as determined by the Mayor and City Council.

The following topics will be discussed:

- A. Community Appearance
- B. Crime and Safety
- C. Financial Stability
- D. Annexation
- E. Work Week Hours
- F. Raising Various Fees
- G. Extension of Alcohol Sales Hours
- H. Additional Personnel
- I. Restructuring Current Debt
- J. 2009-10 Budget

This is the 18<sup>th</sup> day of August 2009.

As determined by the Mayor and City Council

**MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY  
AUGUST 19, 2009  
8:00 a.m.**

The Mayor and City Council met in Special Session on Wednesday, August 19, 2009 at 8:00 a.m. in the Court Room in City Hall, after having recessed from their meeting of August 18, 2009. Mayor Smith presided over the meeting and all Council Members were present, along with the General Counsel, COO and CFO.

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION**

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order. Mr. Woodrow Clark offered the Invocation.

**II. COMMUNITY APPEARANCE:**

**A. \$20,000 BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT**

The Mayor and Council discussed the beautification project and stressed the need to beautify all areas of the City. Mrs. Juan Boswell, volunteer and member of the Columbus Garden Club suggested areas in the City that needed improvement, which will require more funds than are budgeted. Council Member Gavin made a motion to increase the Public Works' budget line item 021-689 to \$20,000. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion, with the exception of Council Member Karriem, who opposed.

The motion passed with a majority vote.

**B. WARD SYSTEM**

The subject of a Ward System was discussed at length. The Ward System would require an entire crew to work in each Ward. It was determined that the Ward System would not be feasible at this time, due to the lack of manpower. The Mayor called for an informal vote to see who was in favor of going to a ward system.

Council Member Karriem voted in favor of the motion. Council Members Taylor, Mickens, Box, Stewart, and Gavin were opposed.

**C. PRIVATIZATION**

Council Member Box initialized a discussion regarding privatization and asked the Council to consider it as an option for the Public Works Department. No one else added input in support of privatization. No further action was taken.

**D. PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST**

The Mayor and Council engaged in a lengthy discussion about a newly created position – Public Relations Specialist – requiring the successful candidate to be

employed by the City of Columbus on a full-time status, but to be shared with the Columbus Municipal School District, who will share 50% of the entire cost for this person. Council Member Taylor made a motion to place money into the budget for the hiring of a Public Relations Specialist with an annual salary of \$45,000, plus fringe benefits, with the agreement that the successful applicant would also work for the Columbus Municipal School District, who will pay 50% of the cost. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion, after which followed discussion.

Council Members Taylor, Stewart, and Gavin voted in favor of the motion. Council Member Mickens, Box, and Karriem voted against the motion, creating a tie vote.

Mayor Robert Smith broke the tie in favor of the motion.

The motion passed.

### **III. CRIME AND SAFETY:**

- A. LATERAL TRANSFERS – Chief St. John reported that he has made some internal transfers of personnel to help the Police Department run more efficiently and effectively. Presently, only one officer is on light duty status. The Chief also reported that he is reworking the K-9 operation.
- B. FOOT PATROL – Foot patrol is most effective in the downtown area. The department's presence is positive for the Citizens.
- C. 2-WHEEL STAND-UP SCOOTERS (Segway) – Mainstreet Columbus is looking into purchasing one (1) Segway for the Police Department.
- D. FOUR (4) NEW OFFICERS – The Chief responded that he originally budgeted six (6) new officers, but have relinquished two to budget cuts and can't afford to cut any more.
- E. DICE (Drug Interdiction Crime Enforcement) – Chief St. John reported that DICE (Drug Interdiction Crime Enforcement) consists of Police Officers that identify high crime areas in Columbus on a weekly basis. This data is then discussed with the Mayor and the COO.
- F. LINK/Police Awareness Program – Chief St. John reported that statistics involving the Columbus Police Department and the City of Columbus are released to the media each month.

### **IV. FINANCIAL STABILITY:**

#### **A. Current Status of General Fund**

Mike Bernsen reported the following data for the period of July 2008 – July 2009:

- REVENUE \$ 1.6 Million
- AD VALOREM \$ 670,000.00
- SALES TAXES \$ 481,000.00
- RESERVE \$ 906,000.00

- B. MIKE BERNSEN – Potential Cuts**
1. Cross Board Salaries (Including Mayor & Council) –
  2. Potential Layoffs
  3. Cutting Operational Budgets
  4. Appropriations

The 2009-2010 budget presently has a \$702,000 deficit. The Council expressed no interest in making salary cuts nor laying off any employees. The consensus of the Council was not to give the LINK a \$10,000 increase to promote the "W" name change. This \$10,000 was subtracted from the deficit amount.

The Council discussed the travel budget and suggested that Council Members alternate attending certain conferences. No action was taken.

The Council also discussed the City's health insurance plan and the Reinsurance exposure. No action was taken.

Appropriations will be discussed at the next meeting.

#### **V. ANNEXATION:**

Chris Watson, with Bridge & Watson, Inc., presented new geography that targets the area that the City is interested in annexing. Mr. Watson stated that he is looking for direction from the Council. Gregg Andrews, Lowndes County Tax Assessor/Collector reported some statistical information regarding real estate parcels, personal property, and the racial make-up in the proposed annexed area.

Council Member Taylor moved to authorize Chris Watson and Bridge & Watson, Inc. to continue the annexation process for study areas 2 and 1 (East of Columbus and North up Highway 45) and report back to the Council upon completion. Council Member Mickens seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion passed.

#### **VI. WORK WEEK HOURS**

The Mayor and Council discussed the present work week hours for Public Works and Administrative staff, which is four days a week, ten hours a day, as opposed to five days a week, eight hours a day. The CFO stated that the City has experienced some savings in utility costs. Following a discussion of this matter with the Department Heads and the Council, the consensus of the Council was to remain on the four days a week, ten hours a day, as long as services are not compromised. No further action was taken.

#### **VII. RAISING VARIOUS FEES:**

The Council discussed increasing certain fees to be in line with other cities in the state and to increase revenue.

- A. Landfill

- B. Garbage
- C. Parking Fees

**Landfill and Garbage Collection fees:**

Council Member Gavin made a motion to increase the landfill fee from \$18.00 to \$21.00 per ton, with at minimum load charge from \$5 to \$10, and increase the Garbage Collection fee by \$2.00 per household, and move all surplus to the general fund. Council Member Box voted in favor of the motion.

Council Members Taylor, Mickens, Box, and Gavin voted in favor of the motion.

Council Member Stewart and Karriem voted against the motion.

The motion passed with a majority vote.

**Parking Fees:**

The Council discussed parking fees. Council Member Gavin made a motion to increase Parking fees from \$5.00 to 10.00. Council Member Karriem seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion passed.

**VIII. EXTENTION OF ALCOHOL SALES HOURS:**

The Mayor and Council discussed the extension of hours for alcohol sales. Council Member Gavin expressed his wish to extend the hours for alcohol sales and permit alcohol sales on Sundays. The Mayor called for an informal vote, which was 4-2 in favor, with Council Members Mickens and Box being opposed.

**IX. ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL – Not discussed.**

**X. RESTRUCTURING CURRENT DEBT:**

Lynn Norris & Steve Edds were present and briefed the Mayor and Council on the difference between Fixed Rates and Variable Rates on State Development loans, which will aid the City in making a change in the present arrangement if it will benefit the City financially.

**XI. 2009-2010 BUDGET:**

- A. Vacuum Truck – The Public Works Director reported that the existing Vacuum Truck needs to be replaced; it is inoperable more than it is operational. Council Member Gavin made a motion to authorize the Mayor to negotiate with the Columbus Light & Water Department for the purchase of their used vacuum truck. Council Member Box seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion passed.

B. Soccer Complex

A meeting was previously scheduled with Lowndes County Supervisors to discuss the proposed Soccer Complex; however, it has been canceled. The Council decided to wait until this meeting is rescheduled.

C. Archview Software – Did not discuss.

D. Additional Budget Discussion

Kevin Stafford, with Neel-Schaffer, discussed projects slated for 2010 and suggested options to minimize professional costs from Neel-Schaffer.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT:**

Mayor Smith asked if there was any addition business to come before the Council. There being none, Council Member Taylor made a motion to recess until Monday, August 24, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Council Member Stewart seconded the motion.

All Council Members voted in favor of the motion.

The motion passed.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert E. Smith, Sr., Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Bernsen  
Secretary-Treasurer