

**HUNTSVILLE CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**Regular Meeting - November 21, 2024 - 5:30 p.m.**  
**City Council Chambers, City Hall**  
**Huntsville, Alabama**

**Members Present:**                      **Mr. John Meredith, President**  
   **Dr. Jennie Robinson**  
   **Mr. Bill Kling**  
   **Mr. David Little**  
   **Ms. Michelle Watkins**

**Mayor:**                                      **Mr. Tommy Battle**  
**City Administrator:**                  **Mr. John Hamilton**  
**City Attorney:**                         **Mr. Trey Riley**  
**City Clerk:**                               **Ms. Shaundrika Edwards**

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**President Meredith** called the meeting to order at the time and place noted above.

The invocation was offered by Chaplain Ben Coronado; Cub Scouts Asher Gerdrill and Jameson Locke of Cub Scout Pack 7609 of Union Hill Primitive Baptist Church led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA.**

**President Meredith** said it had been requested that item 20.j be deleted from the agenda, and he said they would be adding an item to the agenda, as 20.aa.

The agenda was approved as corrected.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING.**

**President Meredith** said the Council members had been provided copies of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Council held on November 7, 2024, and the Minutes were approved as submitted.

## **MAYOR: SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS.**

### **Presentation of Life Saving Medals.**

**Mayor Battle** asked Chief Kirk Giles of the Police Department to come forward, along with Deputy Chief Hudson, and he said they had Life Saving Medals to present.

**Chief Giles** said in July of the current year, Officer Wyatt Wilburn, Officer Kevin Chandler, and Officer Dominique Blue had responded to a shooting in progress on Highway 53, at a Chevron service station, and they had come upon a very chaotic scene, and there was a male with multiple gunshot wounds bleeding profusely, and they had worked together to save this person's life.

Chief Giles presented Life Saving Medals to the officers.

## **COUNCIL: SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.**

### **Resolutions for Approval and Presentation.**

**Resolution No. 24-870**, recognizing the 150th anniversary of the Church Street Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

**Moved for Approval by Watkins/Seconded by Robinson/  
Unanimously Adopted.**

### **(RESOLUTION NO. 24-870)**

**Councilmember Watkins** recognized representatives of the church, and she read from the resolution, noting the celebration of 150 years of faith, hope, and love in the community, and she presented the resolution.

A representative of the church expressed appreciation for the recognition and invited everyone to attend the special events recognizing this occasion.

**Resolution No. 24-908**, honoring Staff Sergeant John Brashears, retired U.S. Army veteran, for his commendable service during WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

**Moved for Approval by Meredith/Seconded by Robinson/  
Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-908)**

**President Meredith** presented the resolution to Mr. Brashears, expressing appreciation for his commendable service.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS.**

**Ms. Penny Smith, Director of Finance**, said at this meeting, they would be starting the round of outside agency presentations, where there would be brief presentations from each of the outside agencies, providing information both to the Council and the public and providing an opportunity for the Council members to ask questions of these agencies about their activities, what they were doing with public spending and the appropriations they had been given. She said the Council members should have in front of them a copy of the Outside Agency book, and within those pages would be each of the agencies they would be hearing from, the appropriation amount, and the project and program that was funded for those annual budgets. She said as each of these organizations came before the Council, the Council members would have before them a sheet outlining the organization, the presenter, the appropriation amount for FY 24 and FY 25, and the goals the agencies had set for themselves, and that would be what their presentations should be about.

**Presentation of Huntsville-Madison County Rescue Squad, by  
David Young, Director.**

(Mr. Young made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Young** said that each year, they requested their appropriation, but he did not think anyone actually knew what they did, so he wanted to give them some of their metrics. He said since 1962, their truck had been running around in the city, but no one really understood what they did.

Mr. Young displayed a slide entitled "Response Demographics," along with the depiction of an accident, and he said he had pulled 2023 and 2024, and these were calls only in the city of Huntsville, not what their agency did as a whole, that it did not have any Madison County demographics in it. He said as they could see on the display, the bulk of their calls were wrecks with possible entrapment, and he said he had broken this out to show how many confirmed entrapments there were in the city limits, along with water rescue operations and recovery. He said these were all going to be pretty much multi-agency responses, where they would see HEMSI, Huntsville Police, Huntsville Fire, the Rescue Squad, Utilities, et cetera.

Mr. Young displayed a slide entitled "EMS/Public Assist," and he said this was what a lot of people did not realize they did. He said that every day at the 911 Center, there were calls that Huntsville Fire did not respond to and HEMSI did not have available units for, that these would be the lift assists, just general public assistance. He said at the beginning of COVID, they had made an agreement with HEMSI, because some of these calls were holding too long, that when the other agencies could not respond, to contact them, and they would handle it. He said in the current year, they had responded to about 192 of these calls.

Mr. Young displayed a slide entitled "Rescue Related Services," and he said this pertained to any type of rescue related calls.

Mr. Young said over the last year and a half, they had incorporated a new operation, from a need, and he displayed another slide, entitled "Dive Operations," and he said this was not offered in this county, or in North Alabama, and in the prior year, they had received multiple calls requesting it. He said they had been working on this for about a year and a half, and through some corporate grants and support from the Madison County Commission, they had put about \$115,000 into specific dive equipment, which did not include any of the training costs, and they had put

10 people from zero to public safety diver, with classes they had been working with for more than a year, and that completed their water operations team, and they were probably the only ones in North Alabama who could do anything involving swift water rescue, surface water rescue, and dive recovery.

Mr. Young displayed another slide, and he said some of the Measurable Marks in 2024 they had met were the 10-person dive rescue component, the order of an advance rescue truck that would replace the current one, the purchase of a brand-new, dive-specific trailer and what was called a multi-stack boat trailer that would allow for quick response to the Tennessee River and Ditto, bringing a larger cache of equipment, and the purchase of new rescue tools to be placed on the new truck.

Mr. Young displayed a slide entitled "2025 Goals," and he said they were going to attempt to include underwater evidence recovery with the Water Operations Team. He said this was somewhat of a joint operation with the Sheriff's Department Crime Scene Unit, so they would also be training some of their investigators. He said they were expecting delivery of their new rescue truck and salvage and rescue equipment. He said at Ditto Landing, there were cars, trailers, et cetera, to be hauled out all the time, and the simple fact was that there was no one around that could get them out, and this type of equipment would give them the capability to remove anything from the waterway. He said they would also like to continue the public assistance support, which were the EMS calls they were managing.

Mr. Young displayed another slide, and he said this concerned something they had started about two years prior that a lot of people were unaware of. He said they had a full complement of boats and equipment, and Special Operations of Huntsville Fire had to do water training as a component of their rescue team, and they did not have a full complement of water rescue, so they had made all their water operations

equipment available to them for this specialized training, and they were also discussing a permanent loan of one of their boats to Huntsville Fire, so that it would be in their cache of equipment.

Mr. Young said he would be happy to answer any questions the Council members might have.

**Councilmember Robinson** said the information they had showed the City's grant to them of \$2900 was 19 percent of their budget, and she inquired as to the source of their other funding.

Mr. Young said the Madison County Commission funded a small portion, and being a 501(c)(3), they were so blessed with the grants from Boeing, et cetera, and the local communities. He said at this time, it was easy to obtain equipment, but it was hard to cover overhead.

Councilmember Robinson said Mr. Young had mentioned working with the Sheriff's Department, and he had mentioned working with Huntsville Fire, and she asked how they worked with Huntsville Fire & Rescue, HEMSI, and HPD.

Mr. Young said they were dispatched by HEMSI, and had been for 60-plus years, and their working operation with Huntsville Fire Special Operations had come tenfold in the past two or three years, that there was no comparison, and they were starting to do joint training, that that was where a lot of this water came into play, in cross-training. He said they did not do as much with HPD, but on every bad wreck that was seen, they were there. He said they lived in the shadows, that they did not talk to the media. He said they were not chasing the day-to-day wrecks, that that was not their job, that they were involved in the bad wrecks. He said the city did not have as many of those as the county, but that was where their truck came into play, that their advanced rescue truck was completely outfitted just for vehicle extrications.

Councilmember Robinson said Mr. Young had said 100 percent of the people they served were in the city, but she thought it would be more accurate to say they were in the county.

Mr. Young said they served all of Madison County, but the numbers the Council had were just city-related calls.

Councilmember Robinson said as she had understood Mr. Young, their focus had been vehicle entrapment, but at this time, they were shifting over to water rescue.

Mr. Young said they had always done the water rescue component in Madison County, but in the last five years, as the county had grown and so much focus had been put on Ditto Landing and the Tennessee River, it had been out in the media a little bit more, that it had always been there but just not talked about. He said the dive component had been added, that that was the newest component.

Councilmember Robinson said it appeared that they had gotten new trucks and new equipment, and that was to support the dive team.

Mr. Young said that was correct.

Councilmember Robinson said since Ditto Landing was in her district, she wanted to express a specific thanks.

**Councilmember Little** asked if it was correct that this squad was all volunteers.

Mr. Young replied in the affirmative.

Councilmember Little asked how many volunteers they had.

Mr. Young said they had about 38 volunteers, and they staffed 24/7, a two-man crew on Rescue 1 on Cook Avenue. He said there was a minimum of a two-man crew that met an EMT basic requirement, and then there was the vehicle extrication. He said he had the water team operations as a special unit that might not necessarily be on shift every day, but they rotated, that they had two 12-hour shifts a

day.

Councilmember Little asked if the two that were on Cook Avenue were down there waiting for the phone to ring, basically.

Mr. Young said that was correct, that they were on Rescue 1, which was primarily going to vehicle extrication type calls.

**President Meredith** thanked Mr. Young for the presentation.

**Presentation of WellStone, Inc., by Jeremy Blair, CEO.**

(Mr. Blair made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Blair** displayed a slide, and he said in the 2024 fiscal year, from October 1 through September 30, they had served a total of 12,064 clients, and of those 6,462 were citizens and residents of the city of Huntsville, and the number of Huntsville clients who did not have insurance was 1,871. He said the focus of the money they received from the City of Huntsville was for those uninsured clients, to be able to make sure they provided services to them. He said no one was turned away from WellStone because of an inability to pay, and the funding they got from the City of Huntsville helped to supplement that.

Mr. Blair displayed a slide entitled "Services Provided in 2024," and he said they provided a total of 309,274 services, and they provided 125,229 services just to residents of Huntsville. He said the total number of services to the city of Huntsville clients without insurance was 41,095, so if they looked at the total amount of funding they received from the city, that would equate to about \$21.90 per service they provided.

Mr. Blair said something they had really been focused on in the last few years was increasing access to care and decreasing the wait time for services. He said their average wait time was now less than two days for a general outpatient appointment. He said crisis services was something they had really focused on in the last four years,



and if anyone was in a mental health crises, they could see them the same day, whether that was through the Crisis Center, their Mobile Crisis Teams, or their Access to Care Department.

Mr. Blair said they were one of three communities in the state that had both an adult and children's mobile crisis team that operated throughout Huntsville, and, of course, they were continuing to add new programs and services, that they had over 60 different programs and services to date, and they had a couple of others that were in the pipeline that they hoped to be able to announce soon.

Mr. Blair displayed another slide, and he said their latest pride and joy was the state's first Pediatric Crisis Center in Alabama, that they had cut the ribbon on this facility in September, so it was now open and operating, accepting clients. He said he was not sure how many they had served to date, but they had had about 40 or so kids go through already, that it was definitely a needed resource for this community, and they were proud to be able to bring it to fruition. He said on the left was the entrance to the facility, and he displayed another slide, which he said were interior pictures. He said it was not a hospital, that they did not want it to be a hospital, that it did not feel like a hospital or an institution, that they had taken special care to make sure that any youth who came in would feel welcome. He also displayed pictures of the playground and outside area.

Mr. Blair asked if any of the Council members had any questions.

**Councilmember Robinson** said one of the things that was included in their packet was the \$900,000 appropriation, and she said she understood that was helping to fund the cost of people who came without insurance.

Mr. Blair said that was correct.

Councilmember Robinson said in addition, it listed a \$200,000 appropriation to support the Crisis Center, \$50,000 for Jail Diversion, and \$120,000 for

Co-responder. She asked if it was correct that that was not part of the \$900,000.

Mr. Blair said that was correct. He said the \$200,000 was for construction for the adult unit, and he believed they were in Year 3 of five years of that.

Councilmember Robinson said they had had questions from the community about their not doing enough to support mental health, but she said when they added all that up, it was almost \$1.3 million.

Mr. Blair said that was correct. He said they were probably the largest recipient of local funds in the state, in terms of mental health centers and local support.

Councilmember Robinson said she thought the reason for this was that by helping to fund this, particularly the Jail Diversion, and also Co-responder and the Crisis Center, they were keeping people out of the jails and the hospitals and emergency rooms, and they were helping to get people into mental health treatment.

Mr. Blair said with the Adult Crisis Center, in the last month, they had approximately 170 admissions, and that was 170 individuals who did not go to jail or did not go to the emergency departments to seek mental health care.

Councilmember Robinson said that, also, they had set them up to go to WellStone.

Mr. Blair said everybody who came through would have follow-up care.

Councilmember Robinson said these were intervention programs, and she thought anything they could do to help with mental health, to get people into treatment, benefitted everyone, as a whole.

Councilmember Robinson asked if the Mobile Response teams were funded by the Co-responder.

Mr. Blair said the Co-responder was a Master's level position that rode shift with an HPD officer, so there were two of those, and the City funded one of those

positions, and that was seven days a week, typically. He said they were responding to the mental health calls that came through 911. He said the Mobile Crisis Team was a two-person team, and it was 24/7, that was responding to mental health calls, usually that were coming through 988, noting that they manned the call center for 988, so if those came through, they deployed. He said there were other occasions when the Co-responders, or HPD, would respond to a situation, and then they would turn that over to the Mobile Crisis Team, so that would free them up for something else.

Councilmember Robinson asked how staffing was going for that, noting she was aware that was an issue.

Mr. Blair said the Mobile Crisis Team was pretty well staffed at this point, both the children's and the adults'. He said weekends had always been a challenge, but they had made some strides there. He said with Co-responders, they kept going through iterations, and he thought there was at least one vacancy at this time.

**Councilmember Kling** said because of WellStone, a lot of people who would otherwise be taken to jail had a much better alternative at this time.

Mr. Blair said the Crisis Center had really been a game-changer, in that they were able to provide services 24/7. He said the Crisis Centers for both children and adults were walk-in at any time, that when someone was in a mental health crisis, they could come at any point, whether it would be after 5:00 or on the weekends.

**President Meredith** thanked Mr. Blair for the presentation.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS TO BE HELD.**

**Public Hearing on authorizing Community Development to assess the cost of cutting overgrown grass and/or weeds against certain properties.**

**Mr. Scott Erwin, Manager of Community Development,** said this was a public hearing on assessing the cost of cutting overgrown grass and/or weeds

against 21 properties, in the amount of \$6,430.89, with the owners of 10 of the properties being inside the city limits of Huntsville, and the owners of 11 being outside the city limits of Huntsville.

**Public Hearing Opened/No Public Comment/Public Hearing Closed.**

**Resolution No. 24-871**, authorizing Community Development to assess the cost of cutting overgrown grass and/or weeds against certain properties.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Kling/Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-871)**

**Public Hearing** on a resolution authorizing the demolition of an unsafe building, constituting a public nuisance, located at 404 Greenacres Dr., NW, Huntsville, AL.

(Mr. Erwin made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Erwin** said this property had a significant fire, and it was graded by an independent contractor on an assessment on July 30, and the loss was 96 percent, so they were bringing this before the Council to abate this public nuisance.

**Public Hearing Opened/No Public Comment/Public Hearing Closed.**

**Resolution No. 24-872**, authorizing the demolition of an unsafe building, constituting a public nuisance, located at 404 Greenacres Dr. NW, Huntsville, AL.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Kling/Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-872)**

**Public hearing in order to hear, consider, and act upon all objections or protests, if any, for removal of a nuisance at 2609 Skyline**

**Dr., NW, Huntsville, AL**, which hearing was set at the November 7, 2024, Regular Council Meeting.

(Mr. Erwin made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Erwin** said this property had a swimming pool that had been neglected, and it was a public nuisance to the neighborhood, and they were bringing this before the Council for abating this public nuisance.

**Public Hearing Opened.**

**Ms. Eunice Ennis**, 2609 Skyline Drive, Huntsville, Alabama, addressed the Council, stating this was her parents' house that she had taken over. She said her dad was disabled, and he really could not take care of it, and he had passed away, and she was financially messed up at this time and was trying to figure out ways to take care of this, that she wanted to fix it up but they just did not have the money at this time. She asked if there was a way she could take care of the water and then clean it up, without having to do anything else.

**Public Hearing Closed.**

**Resolution No. 24-873**, authorizing Scott Erwin, Manager of Community Development of the City of Huntsville, to abate a public nuisance at 2609 Skyline Dr, NW, Huntsville, AL.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Little.**

**Councilmember Little** asked when this action had commenced.

**Mr. Erwin** said this particular process was over the summer, in June, but he was quite sure the property had been in this condition prior to that time, but that was the date when it had first been identified and brought to their attention.

Councilmember Little asked how this pool would be mitigated.

Mr. Erwin said it would be filled in, that they would use the Public Works staff, and the actual cost would be charged, that there would be no fees associated with it,

that actual labor and material costs and equipment charges would be what they would bill the homeowner. He said with failure to pay, there would be a lien placed on the property, but it would not be auctioned, that it would be paid when the title needed to be cleared.

**Councilmember Robinson** inquired as to the cost.

Mr. Erwin said he did not have a firm number, but it would perhaps be 5 or 6 thousand dollars, based on the type fill that was used and the labor.

Councilmember Robinson asked if it was correct that this needed to be done because it was a safety issue in the neighborhood.

Mr. Erwin replied in the affirmative. He said if a small child, or anyone else, got in there accidentally, a loss of life or an injury could occur, and it was their responsibility to try to protect the community from these things.

Councilmember Robinson asked if it was correct that there would be a lien that would be assessed against the property, so that when the property was sold, it would be taken out of the sale of the property.

Mr. Erwin replied in the affirmative. He said the homeowner would get a bill, and with failure to pay the bill, it would be brought to the Council for authorization to place a lien on the property.

**President Meredith** asked if part of the need for this was because there was not a fence of any kind around this pool, if that was one of the criteria for it being determined a nuisance.

Mr. Erwin replied in the affirmative. He said it would need a fence, and also a cover that was safe and secure.

President Meredith asked if this would be only filling in the pool, if that was the only nuisance associated with this property.

Mr. Erwin replied in the affirmative.

**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-873)**

**Public hearing on the rezoning of 2.60 acres of land lying west of Memorial Parkway and north of Airport Road from Commercial Recreation C-5 District to Highway Business C-4 District**, which hearing was set at the October 10, 2024, Regular Council Meeting.

(Mr. Nunez made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Thomas Nunez, Manager of Planning and Zoning Services**, said the petitioner was seeking to rezone this property from Commercial Recreation C-5 District to Highway Business C-4 District, that the overall property was 5.62 acres, and the property was currently dual zoned, and he wanted to clean up the zoning, and that was what this request was for, to have one consistent zoning district for the parcel so a proposed development could move forward.

**Public Hearing Opened/No Public Comment/Public Hearing Closed.**

**Ordinance No. 24-743**, rezoning 2.60 acres of land lying west of Memorial Parkway and north of Airport Road from Commercial Recreation C-5 District to Highway Business C-4 District.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Kling/Unanimously Adopted.**

**(ORDINANCE NO. 24-743)**

**Public hearing on the vacation of rights-of-way and easements in Tracts 1 and 2 of Mundy Meadows Phase 1 and 2**, which hearing was set at the October 24, 2024, Regular Council Meeting.

(Mr. Nunez made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Nunez** said this property was located in the northeast portion of the city,

west of Meridian Street and south of McDonnell Avenue.

Mr. Nunez said what was before the Council was a request to vacate a portion of Lake Street. He said this property was originally platted in May of 1926, noting this was at a time when platting happened prior to the construction of these particular actions. He said some of the Council members might recall that previously a trailer park had sat on this property. He said since the property was acquired, it had been owned by Habitat for Humanity, and they had proposed and developed two subdivisions, for single-family housing, and they were seeking to vacate this portion to create an open space in the area, and he indicated sections on the displayed slide that were proposed to be vacated.

**Mr. Nunez** said this would be a public hearing only at this time, and later in the agenda, items 18.a and 18.b, would be where the Council would take action on this item.

**Public Hearing Opened/No Public Comment/Public Hearing Closed.**

**(Note: See Item 18, Legal Department Items/Transactions, 18.a and 18.b., pages 23 and 24, for Council action on this public hearing.)**  
**PUBLIC HEARINGS TO BE SET.**

**Resolution No. 24-874**, to set a public hearing for revocation of licensure for alleged ordinance violations related to Case No. 402, **at the December 5, 2024, Special Session of the Council, at 3 p.m.**

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Meredith/**  
**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-874)**

**MAYOR COMMENTS.**

**Mayor Battle** said on the prior day, they had a groundbreaking at the old



Lewter Hardware Store, where there would be a development of apartments, townhomes, restaurants, and retail spaces, noting that this was an exciting time for that area of downtown.

Mayor Battle said on the following day, there would be the lighting of Bridge Street, and the holiday season would be in full swing, that there would be Thanksgiving, and then the Christmas Parade.

Mayor Battle said the One Table Thanksgiving event would be held on the following Monday, at 11:30 a.m., in the downtown park, and people from all walks of life would come together and have lunch and give thanks for all the blessings they had had.

#### **COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS.**

**Councilmember Robinson** said the Council would be having a District Christmas Lights Contest, and there was an online form people could fill out, saying why they felt their home was lit for the holidays better than anyone else's, and they should send pictures, and the Council staff would choose a winner for each district. She said the deadline for this was December 8, and they looked forward to seeing all the entries.

Councilmember Robinson said there would again be Christmas on the River at Ditto Landing. She said they would have large Christmas cards on display from citizens and businesses, lining the river; and at the boat harbor, a display of trains running around a Christmas village, with lights; and the boats would be lit up at the docks; and Santa would be there. She said people could check the Ditto Landing website to see all the great things that would be happening there from December 1 to December 30.

**Councilmember Watkins** said she had recently attended a ribbon-cutting for Felicia's Trucking that had opened in District 1, and she congratulated them.

Councilmember Watkins said on December 8th, District 1 would have an inaugural tree-lighting ceremony at the Johnson Legacy Center, noting this would be an opportunity for District 1 to come together and have some fun and enjoy some food, and the Jemison High School Band and Choir would be there, and Alex Banks would be there to play Christmas carols. She invited the Council members and the Mayor to attend this event, on December 8, from 5 to 7 p.m.

**Councilmember Kling** said during the month of December, the Old Town Historic District would be celebrating its 50th anniversary as a historic district. He said they had certainly done a lot of great things, working with the City to improve the quality of life of the downtown community, with the beautiful houses and the wonderful Christmas lights and ornaments that would be going up.

Councilmember Kling thanked the people who had attended his recent Town Meeting, noting they had a good session, and he was still working to get responses to some of the issues discussed and questions asked.

Councilmember Kling said he was continuing to walk around the different neighborhoods in his district, determining their needs and trying to get problems eradicated.

**Councilmember Little** said, concerning the Hands-free Ordinance, that there had been a period of education on this from January through July 31st, and since that time, 135 citations had been written, along with 63 warnings, and he said he would like to offer a friendly reminder for people to leave their phones somewhere else when they were driving.

Councilmember Little urged everyone in District 2 to participate in the Christmas lights contest.

Councilmember Little said he had spent time with the Cub Scouts prior to the meeting, and it was always fun listening to their questions about the job of serving on

the Council, and he appreciated their doing the Pledge at this meeting.

Councilmember Little said on December 3rd, he would be with the Blossomwood Valley Civic Association for their fall meeting, along with representatives from various City departments.

**President Meredith** said he was looking forward to the start of a new season at the Broadway Theater League, noting that for years he and his wife had enjoyed the top-flight entertainment they brought to the VBC.

President Meredith said the expansion of Apollo Park was almost completed, and they anticipated the ribbon-cutting to be held on December 5, at 2 p.m., in MidCity, and he looked forward to seeing everyone there.

President Meredith urged his constituents to enter the Deck the District holiday lights contest, noting he was sure they would have the best lights.

#### **FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT.**

**Resolution No. 24-875**, authorizing expenditures for payment.

**Moved for Approval by Watkins/Seconded by Kling/Unanimously Adopted.**

#### **(RESOLUTION NO. 24-875)**

**Presentation by Ms. Penny Smith, Director of Finance.**

(Ms. Smith made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Ms. Smith** said this would be a quarterly update, and she displayed a slide entitled "Economic Indicators." She said headline inflation numbers were generally flat, that it was basically a lackluster quarter for the last quarter of the fiscal year, which was July through September. She said they were still in a tight labor market, that unemployment rates were slowly beginning to climb nationally, but the city of Huntsville was always under both the state and the national levels as far as unemployment was concerned, so for retention and recruitment of City employees,

they were still competing in local markets.

Ms. Smith said economists had predicted consumer spending would slow, and it had, and most economists said spending would continue to be flat over the next few months, and depending on how that would settle in with the new federal administration, they might see some upswings or downswings, depending on how the market would react.

Ms. Smith said interest rates had been decreased somewhat, and the current rate was between 4.5 and 4.75. She said the decrease in the Federal Reserve Rate bode well for the City as they went to market, that this meant their market rates for borrowing would be lower.

Ms. Smith displayed another slide, and she said for Sales Tax for the last quarter, it was again lackluster, that they were up just a little bit, that they could see the numbers displayed, with 2024 over 2023. She said with the 2.2, 1.0, and negative 1.6 of the last quarter, they had slid into home with a 2.9 percentage increase over the prior year, and they had come in on budget, that they were .3 percent above budget on spending for the last year.

Ms. Smith displayed another slide, and she said it showed the combinations of all those increases as they moved across time, from 2017 to 2024, with the percentages showing the increases over the prior months, from the prior year. She said they could see that over time, they continued to increase, and that had happened this year also, but at a slower rate.

Ms. Smith displayed another slide, and she said this was General Fund Expenditures through September 2024, and it was typical, below budget. She said they did not have all the expenditures for the year-end, so the total expenditures would rise some, but it was not expected they would rise very much, that they would still be under budget, and that was a good sign for the City as they moved forward.

Ms. Smith displayed another slide, and she said Lodging Tax was another revenue segment they followed closely, and she said the August and September numbers had done a flip-flop from the prior year to the current year, noting that sometimes that happened, depending on the types of events that came into the city and the types of spending that would happen. She said that overall, they had again come in on budget for Lodging Tax revenue. She continued that they were looking strong for October, that they were over the prior year's October by 8 or 9 percent, so they were looking good into October, and they would see how that would pan out, noting that anomalies could happen as they moved through the Lodging Tax revenue.

Ms. Smith displayed another slide, and she said she would provide a brief update on what would be coming in the next few weeks. She said she wanted to remind them they had received a AAA rating from Moody's, and they would receive the report from S&P on the following day.

Ms. Smith said on Monday, they planned to issue the Preliminary Official Statement to their investors. She said between the time this was issued and the time they would go to market, on December 5th, PFM would work the markets, and, hopefully, on the 5th, when the markets opened, their bonds would be out there, and they would receive good bids. She said they were to be sold via a competitive sale, so that evening they would need unanimous consent of the Council in order to enable the consideration, and hopefully passage, of the borrowing. She said this was because the people who would have offered on their bonds would be holding those offers, and the City had only so much time to do this.

Ms. Smith said they appreciated having the Council work with them to see this sale go through.

Ms. Smith said Rod Kanter of Bradley Arant was the bond attorney who worked with them, and he would be working that day to finalize the ordinance to

present to the Council on the night of the 5th, and he would be available to answer any questions the Council members might have.

Ms. Smith said she would be happy to answer any questions at this time

**Councilmember Robinson** congratulated Ms. Smith on the AAA bond rating, saying that it was not only good news for the Council but also good news for the taxpayers because it would save the taxpayers money as they went to market and got better interest rates.

**President Meredith** thanked Ms. Smith for the presentation.

**Ordinance No. 24-876**, approving appropriations, goods, or services for District 1 Council Improvement Funds.

**Moved for Approval by Watkins/Seconded by Little.**

**Councilmember Watkins** said these funds would be going to Parks & Recreation, to fund some activities, as well as the tree for the tree-lighting ceremony. She said it was important for them to do some things in District 1 concerning Parks & Rec, that they had to get the kids more active and involved, and she was looking forward to this initiative.

**Councilmember Robinson** said they had talked about getting reports concerning how the Improvement Funds were being spent, and she asked President Meredith if they could work with the Finance Committee to make that happen.

**President Meredith** said they absolutely could.

**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(ORDINANCE NO. 24-876)**

**BOARD APPOINTMENTS TO BE VOTED ON.**

**Resolution No. 24-829**, to appoint **Janice Vaughn to the Human Relations Commission, Place 3**, due to the resignation of Frank Levy, for the

remainder of a vacant four (4) year term to expire September 9, 2026.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Kling/Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-829)**

**Resolution No. 24-830**, to appoint **Tammie Hammons-Figures to the Human Relations Commissions, Place 5**, due to the resignation of Catherine Hereford, for the remainder of a vacant four (4) year term to expire September 8, 2026.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Little/Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-830)**

**BOARD APPOINTMENT NOMINATIONS.**

Nomination to appoint **Angela Mead to the Alabama Constitution Village and Historic Huntsville Depot Board, Place 4**, to fill the seat previously held by Kent Ballard, for a three (3) year term to expire June 26, 2027. (Kling)

Nomination to reappoint **Steve Rowley to the Huntsville Tennis Center Board of Control, Place 2** (his current seat), for a three (3) year term to expire November 28, 2027. (Little)

**Nomination from the Floor:**

Nomination to appoint **Ethan Walker-Jones to the Beautification Board, Place 10**, to the seat previously held by Sherri Stroud, for the remainder of a vacant three (3) year term to expire September 30, 2025. (Kling)

**LEGAL DEPARTMENT ITEMS/TRANSACTIONS.**

**(Note: The following two items pertain to Item 9 on the agenda, Public Hearings to be Held, item 9.e., pages 15 and 16.)**

**Vacation of Rights-of-Way.**

**Resolution No. 24-791**, consenting to the vacation of rights-of way and easements in Tracts 1 and 2 of Mundy Meadows Phase 1 and 2, which resolution was introduced at the October 24, 2024, Regular Council Meeting.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Little/Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-791)**

**Ordinance No. 24-792**, vacating the rights-of-way and easements in Tracts 1 and 2 of Mundy Meadows Phase 1 and 2, which ordinance was introduced at the October 24, 2024, Regular Council Meeting.

**Moved for Approval by Little/Seconded by Meredith/Unanimously Adopted.**

**(ORDINANCE NO. 24-792)**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS ITEMS FOR ACTION.**

**Ordinance No. 24-868**, amending Chapter 3, Article II, Subsection (c) (1) of Section 3-30 (MidCity Arts and Entertainment District Ordinance) of the City's Code of Ordinances, to modify the MidCity Arts and Entertainment District, which ordinance was introduced at the November 7, 2024, Regular Council Meeting.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Little.**

(Mr. Nunez made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Nunez** said this was a proposal to modify the map area of the MidCity Arts and Entertainment District, that the operation hours, et cetera, would remain the same, that this was to add approximately 33.7 acres to the district. He said they had had significant success in this district, and they wanted to expand it, that it had been a goal that as MidCity had continued to develop, they would continue to expand it. He said this encompassed a significant amount of property just east of



Old Monrovia Road and north of Sanderson Road.

**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(ORDINANCE NO. 24-868)**

**Ordinance No. 24-869**, annexing 25.08 acres of land lying north of Bibb Garrett Road and east of I-65, which ordinance was introduced at the November 7, 2024, Regular Council Meeting.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Meredith.**

(Mr. Nunez made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Nunez** said this property was controlled by the City of Huntsville, and they wanted to annex it so that it would be consistent with their additional property, and they were looking forward to seeing further development on this property in the future.

**Councilmember Robinson** asked what would be the value to the City of annexing this, what were the plans for the property.

Mr. Nunez said the City currently owned this property, and they wanted to annex it within the city limits, and there could be some industrial use that would come from this. He said he was uncertain as to the actual value of the property currently, but they wanted to annex it and see further development.

**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(ORDINANCE NO. 24-869)**

**NEW BUSINESS ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION OR ACTION.**

**(Items 20.c, 20.e, 20.f, 20.k, 20.p, 20.r, and 20.aa were held from the consolidation.)**

**Motion for consolidation and adoption of the following items:**

**Moved for Approval by Meredith/Seconded by Little/Unanimously Approved.**

**Consolidated Items:**

Resolution authorizing travel expenses.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-881)**

Resolution authorizing the acceptance of donations.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-882)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute Modification No. 1 to the Agreement between the City of Huntsville, Alabama and Rogers Group, Inc., for Periodic Bid for Drainage Projects-2024, Project No. 71-24-RD01.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-885)**

Resolution authorizing the renewal of an Agreement between the City of Huntsville and GovOS.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-888)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Professional Services Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Merrill Hudnall, DVM.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-889)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute a Proposal for Coverage between the Alabama First Responders Benefit Program and the City of Huntsville, for the purpose of providing a Firefighter Cancer and Long-Term Disability benefit to Active Paid Firefighters.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-890)**

Resolution authorizing the City Attorney to settle the workers' compensation claim of Yulanda Stonewall.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-893)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute Amendment No. 4 to the Development Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Jefferson Hotel Partners, LLC.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-894)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute Amendment No. 1 to the Parking Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Jefferson Hotel Partners, LLC.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-895)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into an Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Marsh & McLennan Agency, LLC., for insurance under the I-565 overpasses at 500 Church Street.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-896)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into an Agreement between the City of Huntsville and the Alabama Historical Commission, for the Terry Heights Phase II Survey.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-898)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute Modification No. 2 to the Agreement between the City of Huntsville and APAC-Alabama, Inc., for Periodic Bid for Concrete Work, 2022, Project No. 71-21-SP38.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-900)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Special Employee Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Earl Malcome Davis.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-901)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Special Employee Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Sandra C. Barnes.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-902)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Special Employee Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Roosevelt Daffin.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-903)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Special Employee Agreement

between the City of Huntsville and Derrick Woodruff.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-904)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Special Employee Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Marguerite Ware.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-905)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Special Employee Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Janel Ploge.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-906)**

Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Special Employee Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Jon Hoffman.

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-907)**

**Items Not Consolidated:**

**Resolution No. 24- 884**, authorizing the Mayor to enter into an Agreement with the Secretary of the Army, accepting a grant of easement for a public walking track on the greenway on Redstone Arsenal.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Kling.**

**Councilmember Kling** said he had held this item because he thought it was a good example of cooperation and working with the Arsenal, the federal government, and he thought it was a good project that Mr. Davis could comment on.

(Mr. Davis made a PowerPoint presentation.)

**Mr. Shane Davis, Director of Urban and Economic Development**, said this was a 50-year lease between the City of Huntsville and the Department of the Army, at no cost to the City. He said on the displayed screen, the areas shaded in green were the existing greenway network, predominantly in South Huntsville and along the river, and the area in red was a 1.5 mile missing link that Engineering was ready to finish up plans to construct. He said he would zoom into the area that was

the lease area, and there was a section of property in order to cross Green Cove Road, to go along what was an existing sewer outfall easement they were putting these greenways in, that would traverse across the Department of the Army property to be able to connect these two missing links. He said they had been working on this for a while, and the Garrison and the Department of the Army had been super helpful on this.

Mr. Davis said this would be a 50-year lease, to allow them to use this area for a greenway, to the maximum extent they were allowed to enter, which was 50 years. He said typically what would happen would be that it would renew as they got close to the time of the initial 50 years.

**Councilmember Robinson** said this connection was much anticipated by folks who wanted to go from Hays Farm down to the river, so this was great news to hear. She asked if they were making progress on the remainder of the section in red.

Mr. Davis replied in the affirmative. He said upon approval of this, it would give them all the easement they needed, and this would be scheduled for construction in the upcoming year, sometime in the spring or summer. He said this missing link would connect what would be a 15-mile loop that would be complete.

**Roll-Call Vote:**

**Ayes:**           **Little, Robinson, Kling, Meredith**

**Nays:**           **None**

**Abstain:**       **Watkins**

**Motion Passed.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-884)**

**Resolution No. 24-886**, authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Preliminary Engineering, Right-of-Way, Utility, and Construction Agreement between the City of Huntsville, Alabama and the Alabama Department of Transportation, for

Slaughter Road at Madison Boulevard, Project No. 71-25-TIO1 & ALDOT Project No. STPHV-4514.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Kling.**

**Mr. Davis** said they had received a federal grant for this project, that they had applied for federal grant funds due to the fact that Slaughter Road, as one headed north from Madison Boulevard to U.S. 72, was multijurisdictional; however, from Old Madison Pike to Madison Boulevard was fully in the city of Huntsville, and it was the highest, most congested portion of that route. He said they had come up with a schematic plan to help that intersection, and they had applied for and gotten a federal appropriation for that from Congressman Strong's office, in the amount of \$4.3 million, and this was to accept that and allow them to move forward with the engineering, and ultimately into construction.

**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-886)**

**Resolution No. 24-887**, authorizing the formation of an Energy Task Force to assist Huntsville Utilities and its selected consultants with preparation of a Community Energy Resource Plan.

**Moved for Approval by Little/Seconded by Robinson.**

**Mr. Wes Kelley, President and CEO of Huntsville Utilities**, said he would provide a little information about this new task force they were asking to be formed by the City of Huntsville. He said this was a little different from a normal study, that Huntsville Utilities typically did lots of engineering studies to look at infrastructure improvements that were needed, whether it would be on the electric, water, or gas systems, but this had a broader area of concern, a broader area of opportunity. He said he and Mayor Battle had been talking for some time about all the changes that were going on in the energy landscape, not only in the Tennessee

Valley but across the country, and he had also had the opportunity to talk with various Council members.

Mr. Kelley said this was an opportunity for them to provide some focus, to bring some consultants in and select a group of key community stakeholders who would work with those consultants to develop Huntsville's energy solutions.

Mr. Kelley said there were a lot of technical innovations that were going on at this time, in the area of solar, in the area of storage, and in the area of more efficient energy production, that those broad changes were seeping across the country, creating new opportunities but also some instability, that the old tried and true, the old plug and chug and let it go, was not working the way it used to, that there was more flexibility, which he noted was another way to say instability, because it was now that you could do this or you could do that.

Mr. Kelley said that was flowing into the Tennessee Valley, and the Tennessee Valley Authority was reacting to those changes. He said for many years, he had been a part of the TVA Integrated Resource Planning process, and about every four or five years, he had had the privilege of being on three of these initiatives. He said TVA was working through how they were going to adopt new technologies, new resources, new both political and societal issues associated with energy, that they were processing how to manage that within the TVA system, and that had prompted them to say that maybe the local Utilities that bought power from them needed to have more resources, more skin in the game, more risk, and also more opportunity, so TVA was talking early about there might be changes to the wholesale power contract, which in the past had been pretty monolithic, that they bought all their power from TVA, and they sent them a big bill, that they paid TVA about half a billion dollars a year. He said the idea was that in this more dynamic environment, where resources were smaller and more distributed, with some of them being located behind customer

meters, some of them located behind Huntsville Utilities' meters, and some rolling up to TVA, how they wanted to thread those things together.

Mr. Kelley said Black & Veatch was a well-respected, national consulting firm, and what they were asking was for them to work with them to lay out these sorts of energy scenarios, and to look at specifically how it would fit within the Tennessee Valley, and to start crafting directionally what made sense for Huntsville. He said this was not the kind of thing where the Council was going to see they needed to upgrade a circuit from one point to another, or they needed to build a particular asset and where to put it on the ground, that this was a more directional study that could influence the Huntsville Utilities Boards and the Council as they exercised their opportunities and responsibilities for crafting this future for Huntsville. He said it was a directional analysis with long-term consequences.

Mr. Kelley said he would be happy to answer any questions the Council members might have.

**Mayor Battle** said they had been talking about this for quite some time, and they would like for this group to also look at the structure of Huntsville Utilities, noting they were in the same structure they were in in the 1960's, when they had 30,000 people, and they now had 250,000 people, and they wanted to make sure their structure was such that they could respond to the needs of what they were going to have tomorrow, whether it would be energy, whether it would be the idea they were going to generate energy, whether it would be the idea they needed more conservation. He said they needed to make sure they had the proper setup so they could have the right people at the helm as they worked through this. He said there was nothing more important for the community than making sure they had the energy to meet all their needs.

Mr. Kelley said their current statutory language did not grant Huntsville



Utilities the authority to generate power, and that was obviously one of the things that was on the table, that as they wanted to move out on these things, there were legal and other considerations to weigh.

**Councilmember Watkins** asked Mr. Kelley if they had considered involving the Madison County Commission and the City of Madison as representatives, having them seats on the committee.

Mr. Kelley said as they got this put together, they probably needed to find how they could link in. He said the City of Huntsville had a unique responsibility over Huntsville Utilities, in that they were the ultimate governing body, so it seemed appropriate that they would select the people who would be guiding this process forward, but he thought they could absolutely find ways to link the Madison County Commission and the City of Madison into this process.

Councilmember Watkins said she thought it would be very important to involve them, especially since they were neighbors and used their utilities, to have them a seat at the table.

**Motion to amend Resolution No. 24-887**, to add that the Madison County Commission and the City of Madison be given one seat each on the Task Force.

**Motion by Watkins/Seconded by Kling.**

**Councilmember Watkins** said she was specifically asking for the Madison County Commission and the City of Madison to be included because they were Huntsville's next-door neighbors, and she thought it would give them the opportunity to have some input, as well as to make them feel a part of this process. She said it was one seat each, so it would just be two seats.

**Councilmember Kling** said he liked the idea of governing bodies working together, that he did not see any downside to this.

**Councilmember Watkins** said she did not want to take away from the Mayor's three appointments or Huntsville Utilities' three appointments. She continued that the Chamber had one, and she said the Chamber was a non-governing body. She said she was thinking they should have two additional seats, one for Madison City and one for the Madison County Commission, to let them appoint one person each, to let them have representation as well. She said if they were going to do a study of this magnitude, they should make sure they valued their input as well.

**Councilmember Kling** said as he understood it, they were talking about expanding the Task Force, to include one person from the City of Madison and one person from the Madison County Commission, as appointments, since none of the Council members would be serving.

**Councilmember Watkins** said the Task Force was currently going to be composed of 12 members, that each City Council member would get to appoint a person, the Mayor would appoint three, Huntsville Utilities would appoint three, and the Chamber of Commerce would appoint one, for a total of 12. She said what she was asking for was an amendment to allow the Madison County Commission to appoint one person, not from the Madison County Commission but someone whom they would appoint, as well as the Madison City Council doing the same.

**President Meredith** said Councilmember Watkins' amendment was to paragraph 6 in the resolution, to delete the number "twelve" in the first sentence and to insert the number "fourteen;" to delete the word "and" in the phrase "and one member appointed by the Huntsville Madison County Chamber of Commerce;" to strike the period at the end of the paragraph and to insert a comma; and to add "one member appointed by the Madison County Commission, and one member appointed by the Madison City Council," with paragraph 6 reading, if the amendment were passed, as follows: "The Task Force shall be made up of fourteen community

members who shall be appointed as follows: one member from each City Council district (appointed by that district's councilperson), three members appointed by the Mayor, three members appointed by Huntsville Utilities, one member appointed by the Huntsville Madison County Chamber of Commerce, one member appointed by the Madison County Commission, and one member appointed by the Madison City Council.”

**Councilmember Robinson** said perhaps they should have put on the record that the Task Force members would be appointed by the Madison County Commission and the Madison City Council and would not be members thereof.

**President Meredith** called for the vote on the amendment as stated above.  
**Unanimously Approved.**

**Motion to postpone consideration of Resolution No. 24-887, as amended, until the next Regular Meeting of the Council, on December 5, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.**

**Motion by Little/Seconded by Kling/Unanimously Approved.**

**Resolution No. 24-892**, consenting to certain actions of the Huntsville and Madison County Railroad Authority.

**Moved for Approval by Meredith/Seconded by Robinson.**

**Mr. Riley** said Mr. Lumb, the Board Chair, could explain exactly what was going on with this matter. He said the law that enabled the creation of the Huntsville-Madison County Railroad Authority provided for certain instances or certain actions where they would have to obtain the consent of both the Madison County Commission and the City Council of Huntsville in order to proceed, and this was one of those things. He said it was important to note, however, that the City of Huntsville would not be obligated or have any liability for repayment on the loans that were being contemplated, for which consent was being asked.

Mr. Riley said Mr. Lumb might wish to speak to the Council about what the purpose of the loans were and what their plans were.

**Mr. Mark Lumb, Chairman of the Huntsville and Madison County Railroad Authority**, said their 1984 Articles of Incorporation required the public authority to come before the Madison County Commission and the City Council of Huntsville, which were their two authorizing subdivisions, to seek approval for certain actions. He said they had not been elevated for inflation, that they were still stuck back in 1984, and anything over \$100,000 required City and Madison County consent.

Mr. Lumb said what they were asking for was the County's approval, which they had achieved earlier on this date, and the City Council's approval, which they hoped to get at this meeting, for two items. He said the Council might recall that the Railroad Authority was awarded a federal CRISI grant, a Consolidated Railroad Infrastructure Safety and Improvement Act grant, for approximately \$6 million, back in September of 2023. He said understanding how the feds worked, they would not just give them a check for \$6 million, that they required them to front the money for the improvements to their line, submit invoices, and then seek repayment.

Mr. Lumb said they needed a line of credit for \$3 million to do that, and they had worked out the details with Bryant Bank, so they were seeking the City Council's consent to execute that line of credit. He said they were also refinancing an existing loan of approximately \$600,000, from First National Bank to Bryant Bank. He said this was over their \$100,000 threshold, that it was existing debt, that there was no additional debt, but because of the parameters of the grant, it was very attractive to Bryant to offer them a better rate, and they would like to refinance, so this was for consent to refinance and consent to execute the line of credit. He said like Mr. Riley had said, there would be no liability whatsoever associated with either the County or

the City for these two actions.

**Councilmember Robinson** asked if the CRISI grant was the grant that would return railroad service to Saint-Gobain.

Mr. Lumb said they had been working with Mr. Davis on this, and they had repaired the bridge at Aldridge Creek. He said the CRISI grant would wholly replace the Aldridge Creek bridge, so they had temporary repairs, but this would completely rehabilitate the line.

**Councilmember Little** asked if it was correct that the total CRISI grant was \$6 million, and they were taking down \$3 million, and then once that was done, there would be another \$3 million.

Mr. Lumb said there was a City match, that there was an Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, ADECA, match, and then there was an HMCRA input, and all total, it was around \$6 million.

Councilmember Little said he was aware they were looking for more storage, which was not in back yards in certain parts of South Huntsville, and he asked if they would have upgraded rail from downtowns all the way down.

Mr. Lumb replied in the affirmative. He said they would have an upgraded road bed, an upgraded right-of-way, from downtown all the way to Saint-Gobain, and they would be able to get those railroad cars off the tracks and out of the line of sight from back yards, as Councilmember Little had mentioned.

Councilmember Little asked if the upgraded track would increase train speeds.

Mr. Lumb said it would not necessarily, that they had to be very mindful of working with the City, that they were a public railroad authority, and they wanted to be, first and foremost, a good neighbor, so in terms of train speeds, they were very conscious of the rights-of-way they crossed and what was impacted in terms of traffic and safety, and, frankly, people were used to 15 miles per hour, and it would be quite

a change to increase that to 25 or 30. He said that was way off in the future, if at all.

**Councilmember Kling** said he wanted to wave a flag about the railroad crossings, noting that he had sent emails concerning Drake Avenue and Bob Wallace, and downtown also had a lot of issues.

Councilmember Kling asked if there was ever a chance, because of the upgrading of the rails, that it could be used for some sort of passenger service, perhaps more like a commercial tourism spur line.

Mr. Lumb said he would give a very simple answer to what was a very complicated issue, and the simple answer was "Yes."

**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-892)**

**Resolution No. 24-897**, rescinding Resolution No. 24-861 and authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Service Agreement between the City of Huntsville, Huntsville Housing Authority, and Urban Strategies, Inc., for the Mill Creek Choice Neighborhood Initiative People Strategy Agreement.

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Kling.**

**Mr. Davis** said the Council had previously approved a Services Contract with Urban Strategies. He said there was some indemnification language they wanted in this to protect the City, and by mistake, this was missing from the resolution that had been passed, so what they were asking the Council to do at this time was to rescind the previous resolution and approve the corrected one. He said the contract terms would remain the same.

**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-897)**

**Resolution No. 24-899**, authorizing the Mayor to enter into an Agreement between the City of Huntsville and Skyfire AI, Incorporated, to support the City's

sUAS (small Unmanned Aerial System).

**Moved for Approval by Robinson/Seconded by Meredith.**

**Mr. Hamilton** said what was before the Council was an agreement with Skyfire, which did a lot of work in the UAS business, and with whom the City was seeking a partnership to continue to expand and grow their program. He said the Council members were aware that they had introduced drones into their public safety apparatus, both Police and Fire, and there were also other departments who used the UAS for varied purposes, but it was specifically for public safety, that both Police and Fire had been able to use this. He said it was kind of a force multiplier, that it gave them opportunities to have visibility on scenes, whether it would be a fire scene or something involving an alleged crime, that it would give them another perspective in many cases, and it contributed to the safety of the officers, as well as any civilians or citizens who might be involved in a particular situation.

Mr. Hamilton said one of the things that was kind of the next stage in UAS programs, which they would see rolling out in a number of departments across the country, was what was referred to as "DFR," which was Drone as a First Responder.

Mr. Hamilton said they were seeking this partnership with Skyfire, which would conduct the training they needed and help them implement the policies and procedures to do this safely, and to provide oversight of that program. He said what drones as first responders would allow them to do would be that when someone called 911, and they had an emergency, with both Police and Fire, it would allow them to immediately launch a drone, from centralized locations, to get eyes onto the scene as quickly as possible, so if there was something that was occurring there, officers or fire fighters would be getting reads ahead of time, as to what was happening, so they could come better prepared, and it would be a much safer environment for them to come into. He said it also allowed them to sometime get on a scene and realize there

was nothing happening there and to turn off the dispatch of an officer or a fire truck. He said allowing them to get those eyes at a safe distance onto a scene and bring the proper resources into whatever the situation might be was ultimately what this was about.

**Councilmember Little** said it was fascinating, from a technology standpoint, that they could deploy a drone so quickly and have eyes on the scene, that that was great for the city.

Mr. Hamilton said it was not just having the drone up there, that it was having somebody who was watching the feed and understanding what they were seeing and being able to communicate to officers and fire fighters about what they were seeing, particularly on the law enforcement side of this. He said NAMACC was the key to that, that when this drone launched, that feed was going back, and the leadership at NAMACC was able to see it and to give appropriate guidance to the people who were responding and trying to assist whoever might be on the scene.

**Unanimously Adopted.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-899)**

**Resolution No. 24-909**, authorizing the Mayor to enter into a Purchase and Sale Agreement between the City of Huntsville and the Industrial Development Board of the City of Huntsville, for approximately 13.04 acres located in Cummings Research Park.

**Moved for Approval by Meredith/Seconded by Kling.**

**Mr. Davis** said this was a late add to the agenda, and they certainly appreciated the Council's consideration of this resolution at this time, due to a time constraint. He said the Council historically approved two or three of these a year, a purchase agreement for land in Research Park that they had for sale, at a price set by the City Council. He said it would be authorizing them to sell 13.04 acres to the



Industrial Development Board. He said the rate was \$71,500 per acre, set by ordinance, for a total of \$932,360. He said as to the urgency for this, that this was in partnership with Auburn University. He said Auburn University had entered into Research Park with a research and development institute a few years prior, and they had seen great success and were continuing to grow that. He said the Council members might have seen a recent announcement from Auburn University and the Department of Defense of a long-term research contract they had received, and they would be building a new research institute in Cummings Research Park, in partnership with the Industrial Development Board, helping them get that accelerated. He said they had to be in the building by September of 2025, so time was of the essence. He said the Auburn Board of Trustees had approved the project, and the next step was for the City to enter into a contract for the right for them to purchase, through IDB, this property.

Mr. Davis said what they were trying to do, in the spirit of being able to move in in September, was to close their financial documents with Regions Bank by the end of the month. He said this was the last Council meeting of the month, due to the holiday, so they had requested that the Council consider this so they could stay on track for their financial closing. He said they wanted the approval of this purchase agreement so they could finalize their financing this month.

**Councilmember Watkins** asked if they had appraised this property.

Mr. Davis said the land price in Cummings Research Park varied on location, and it was set by City ordinance. He said they had three price-per-acre points, internal lots, which was what this was; external lots along Explorer Boulevard, which were at a higher price; and lakefront lots, and there was only one of those left, and that was the most expensive. He said the price was set depending on the location and access to the lots, and it was set by City ordinance. He said they had gone up on the

price per acre about three years prior. He said they did not do an appraisal because the ordinance set the price per acre.

Councilmember Watkins asked if Mr. Davis had that ordinance handy.

Mr. Davis said he could email it to her.

Councilmember Watkins said she would like to see it, because she was kind of confused on this. She said property values changed constantly, and she asked if they adjusted the property values as property values changed, when they were getting ready to sell property. She said she did not understand how a City ordinance could dictate this because if the property value changed, that meant the property value could go up, the price, and she was trying to figure out how they came up with the price.

Mr. Davis said he would point out that this was not the only area where the Council set the price, that the North Huntsville Industrial Park was very similar, set by ordinance, and Chase Industrial Park was very similar, and certainly Spacegate Industrial Park, but it was now fully sold out. He said when they created these industrial parks, although Research Park was a research and development park and not so much manufacturing, they put the utilities in and created the lot, and they tried to recover their cost for the infrastructure, and the land sales would create jobs, like in most other cities, but when they did that, the City Council set the ordinance for those lot sales, so it was not so much a transaction that would be seen between two private parties, that they were trying to recoup some of their infrastructure costs but also to create jobs.

Mr. Davis said he would send the ordinance to Councilmember Watkins, and since North Huntsville Industrial Park was in her district, he would send her both of them.

Councilmember Watkins said her concern was that Research Park was prime

property. She said her other concern was with her being new on the Council, this was a last-minute item, and this process was not explained to her. She said she had read all the documents that were attached, and that was not explained, so it was kind of hard for her to make a decision when she did not have the materials to help her make that decision.

Mr. Davis said he would apologize for that. He said he had sent an email to the Council on the prior day trying to lay all of it out.

Councilmember Watkins said she did not see anything in that about the property value and how it was determined.

**Councilmember Robinson** said, for clarification, she understood this sale was different from any other commercial sale because the value was not in the land but in the potential jobs that would come and the sales taxes and property taxes from developing what was at this time empty land, so that would be where the value would come from.

Mr. Davis said that was correct. He said the reason there was an ordinance setting that value was that, certainly, the Council or the citizenry would not want his position in office or the Administration setting some rate of sale, and that was why the Council set the rate. He said there was an established price per acre, and there was a price map that went with that, so anyone wishing to purchase property in an industrial park or in Cummings Research Park, that as long as long as they met the intended use restrictions, they would have the opportunity to purchase that property.

Councilmember Robinson said that would make it fair and transparent for all purchasers of all properties.

Mr. Davis said that was correct.

**President Meredith** said to Councilmember Watkins that if she thought that price was too low, the Council could revisit that ordinance and perhaps raise the

prices, that it was just not market rate, so to speak, but they could take a look at that.

**Mr. Davis** said they thought that at this time, it was in line with the market rate.

**Roll-Call Vote:**

**Ayes: Kling, Robinson, Little, Meredith**

**Nays: Watkins**

**Motion Passed.**

**(RESOLUTION NO. 24-909)**

**SECOND ROSTER PUBLIC COMMENTS.**

**President Meredith** said this portion of the meeting was reserved for persons wishing to address the Council on matters relating to City business, whether or not such items were on the meeting agenda. He said persons could sign up to speak on the Second Public Comments Roster prior to or during the meeting, and that when called, they should approach the microphone and state their name, home address, and city of residence. He said each speaker could address the Council for three minutes, and that speakers shall refrain from entering into a dialogue with Council members or City staff and from making comments regarding the good name and character of any individual.

**Dr. Marisa Allison** addressed the Council, stating she lived in District 2, and her address was listed (7100 Owens Dr., SE, HSV), and having signed up to speak concerning "Gaza."

**Ms. Moni Ahmed**, Madison, addressed the Council, stating her address was on file (123 Foxhound Drive), and having signed up to speak concerning "Genocide."

**Ms. Sarah Collette** addressed the Council, stating her address was listed properly on the sheet (Lawrence Rd., Hartselle), and having signed up to speak concerning "Accountability."

**Ms. Alyx Kim-Yohn**, addressed the Council, stating she was a resident of Huntsville and her address was on file (12023 Chicamauga Tr., SE, HSV), and having signed up to speak concerning "Thanksgiving."

**ADJOURNMENT.**

Upon motion, the meeting was adjourned.

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PRESIDENT OF THE CITY COUNCIL

ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

**(Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m., November 21, 2024.)**