

**City of Natchez
Minutes
Mayor and Board of Aldermen
Special Call Joint Board Meeting
with The Adams County Board of Supervisors**

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

10:30 AM

**NATCHEZ CONVENTION CENTER
& VIA TELECONFERENCE**

Board Secretary, Sevetrius Dillon

1. Call to Order by Mayor Dan Gibson
2. Prayer by Mayor Dan Gibson
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Roll Call by City Clerk:

Present: Alderwoman Valencia Hall
Alderman Billie Joe Frazier
Alderwoman Sarah Carter-Smith
Alderman Benjamin Davis
Alderman Daniel Dillard

Absent: Alderwoman Felicia Bridgewater-Irving

Also Present: Attorney, Bryan Callaway
Servia Fortenberry- City Clerk
Sevetrius Dillon – Chief Deputy City Clerk

5. Roll Call by Adams County Board of Supervisors
Administered By Board President Angela Hutchins

Present: Supervisor Wes Middleton
Supervisor Kevin Wilson
Supervisor Ricky Gray
Supervisor Warren Gaines
Chancery Clerk Brandy Lewis
County Attorney Scott Slover
County Administrator Angie King
County Sheriff Travis Patten

Introduction of Special Guest

- The Honorable Delbert Hosemann - Lieutenant Governor State of Mississippi
Mr. Hosemann presented a detailed overview of what was accomplished by the State Legislature during the previous session, including education based funding, teacher needs funding, workforce training structural reforms on the state level, medical technology bill, and a golf cart law. Mr. Hosemann also gave an outlook on what the legislature plans to accomplish in the next session and praising the medical community for their efforts during the pandemic. Mr. Hosemann then explained that the City of Natchez will receive \$3.3 million and Adams County will receive \$5.9 million as well as laying out where other monies will be received throughout Mississippi and what they will be allocated for while stressing the importance of using these monies in order to enact changes that last for generations within each

municipality. Mr. Hosemann went on to state that a Transportation Bill is imminent which will add additional funds for municipalities.

Mayor Dan Gibson

- Mayor Gibson presents a summary of the positive direction the City of Natchez is moving in by outlying the economic growth that the city is experiencing and is poised for including a rise in new business permits, and new jobs. He continues that Natchez is hiring as evidenced by several hundred job posting available, 120, and soon to be 200, employees at Loss Prevention Services; a new business downtown. The Mayor also states that there are prospects for International Paper and Bellwood Industrial sites. He thanked Mr. Hosemann for his leadership in helping Natchez/Adams County receive \$1 million in bond funds to complete Bellwood Levee, which will protect the industrial park from future flooding, as well as his leadership in having our State Park renamed after the late Sen. Bob M. Dearing. Additionally the airport is receiving federal funds for renovations. Mayor Gibson points out the cities positive COVID response, as indicated by being named to Forbes Top Ten destinations during a pandemic. The Mayor continues to explain the Shift South remote worker program which has had over 800 million exposures worldwide to Natchez and the campaign. Continuing on the mayor states that over 300 houses bought over the last 8 months in Natchez. He then shifts to positives in tourism development as highlighted by the cruises lines Viking, American Cruise Lines, and American Queen noting that by Fall of 2022 they are projected to be carrying over 2000 passengers per week into Natchez while also committing funds to building their own docks and the raising of Silver Street. The mayor also shares that the sales tax revenue is currently \$118 thousand above that of 2019. Mayor Gibson also expressed gratitude for the unity shared between the cities aldermen, the counties supervisors, and the community. He also expresses pride in the goal of a more holistic telling of the history of Natchez history. Expressing commitment to securing significant federal funds for Forks of the Road Slave Market District, as well as working on a monument to the US Colored Troops, identifying and marking significant African-American history sites and civil rights sites in Natchez and Adams County in order to bring unity, community, and opportunity to Natchez. Lastly the Mayor outlines plans for the City of Natchez to renovate the recreational opportunities in Natchez/Adams County. These include plans for renovations in all six of Natchez's city owned parks, such as a golf club house renovation, building of three new tennis courts, renovation of the youth center at North Natchez Park, as well as improving lighting, replacing broken bleacher seats, and bringing in new playground equipment. In addition the Mayor explained the long term goal for recreation is the creation of a new sports complex for Natchez/Adams County; however the short term goal remains the completion of the city/county pool.

Adams County Board of Supervisors President Angela Hutchins

- Mrs. Hutchins thanks the governor for his help. Asks for help with investment plan including an airport terminal upgrade, Morgantown road repairs, the Silver Street flooding project, criminal lab funding for the Southwest Mississippi region, the Concord Project, and improvements to the port loading dock.
- She then recognized Mr. Tony Howard of the Adams County Port Commission
 - Discusses the need for funding of port improvements and economic impact that said improvements would have. Mr. Howard focused on the need of emergency vehicle access to the end of the port, driveways to service distribution hubs, and other infrastructure upgrades for a liquid loading dock.
- Mrs. Hutchins continues by requesting funding for a regional workforce development center and the lighting of the Mississippi River Bridge between Natchez and Vidalia.

Mayor Gibson

- In summary before opening the floor up to the aldermen, supervisors and guest, want to capitalize on the American Rescue Plan by investing in assets the will benefit the Natchez/Adams County community for many years to come specifically

the airport improvements (with the intent of implementing passenger service within the airport), Morgantown Road (upgrading the safety concerns the roads condition poses) and the lighting of the Mississippi River Bridge.

Supervisor Hutchins

- Requests state funding for projects that promote tourism destination development including the cruise ship infrastructure, historical site attractions, drainage infrastructure projects, and workforce training initiatives.

Mayor Gibson opens the floor to supervisors, aldermen, and guests.

Supervisor Gray

- Expresses concerns over the lack of good paying jobs in the Southwest Mississippi region.

Alderman Frazier

- Reiterates Supervisor Gray's concerns pointing out the disparaging amount of citizens that must commute from the community to find good jobs and asks for the state's assistance in finding an industry to fill this need.

Alderwoman Hall

- Discusses the unity among the Natchez & Adams County governing bodies. Thanks the Mayor and both the Board of Aldermen and Supervisors, as well as Chandler Russ for their roles in economic development through the Remote Worker Program, Project Silver, as well as several tourism development projects.

Alderwoman Irving

- Explains the Concord Drainage Project and the infrastructure, flooding, mold and mildew issues that are being experienced by citizens in the affected community and the need to improve the quality of life of the residents by resolving these issues.

Adams County Chancery Clerk, Brandi Lewis

- Expressed happiness for the inclusion of mental health initiatives in the potential funding that will be coming to Natchez and Adams County.

Alderwoman Smith

- Complimented the state on how well they have handled the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supervisor Middleton

- Thanked Lt. Gov. Hosemann and Rep. Mims for their time and commitment to Adams County and expressed optimism for the future of Adams County.

Alderman Dillard

- Discussed the apparent "Brain Drain" underway in the state of Mississippi illustrating how Mississippi educates individuals to go and work outside of the state. He proposed some form of incentive for college graduates to stay in state for work for a period of time after graduation. He also pointed out the areas dependency on the oil industry and a wish for any assistance possible to entice larger industries to be incorporated into the oilfield assets the region offers.

Supervisor Gaines

- Discussed drainage projects and the need for assistance in workforce development programs and the benefits they provide.

Alderman Davis

- Thanked Lt. Gov. Hosemann and Rep. Mims for coming to Natchez and expressed optimism that Southwest Mississippi was not being overlooked and that the funding would be available to undertake several community projects.

Supervisor Wilson

- Thanked Lt. Gov. Hosemann and Rep. Mims. Also thanked Chandler Russ and Mayor Gibson for their work in getting smaller industries to Natchez commenting that “Natchez is looking up”. However Supervisor Wilson expressed concerned over the trend of individuals leaving to attend college not coming returning to the area and the long term effects of potentially losing older members of the community moving away to be with their families.

Lt. Gov. Hosemann

- Offers advice and counsel regarding allocation of funding advising the boards to pick the most important project and proceed, then later pick another, and still later another, in order to accomplish the top priorities in their wish-lists. Discusses the growth model for the region which shows that businesses of 50-100 jobs should be targeted for relocation to the area. Discusses the negative impact that having an industry that is too large come into the area would have. Advises the boards to apply for funding for the airport renovations and water and drainage projects as part of the Rescue Bill as soon as possible. Discusses his commitment to the streamlining of Mississippi’s workforce development through the implementation of a workforce czar and encourages the boards to speak with him in order to accomplish their workforce development initiatives stating that southwest Mississippi is poised to grow but needs an educated workforce to do so. On the port Mr. Hosemann expressed commitment to brown water ports and the possibilities they present as economic generators. Discussed the issues of the crime lab stating that the problems are not regional they are statewide stemming from staffing issues within the state crime lab itself. Tourism development funding is allocated and will be a significant amount of money.

Adams County Sheriff, Travis Patten

- Requests that the Lt. Gov. Hosemann look into the Officer at Home program which allows funding for officers to relocate in order to relieve the stress on those officers living in the neighborhoods they patrol and make arrests in. Also requests looking into providing hazard pay to officers during the pandemic in order to not lose officers to other areas.

Clovis Reed, County Administrator Claiborne County

- Shared the enjoyment he had recently on a weekend getaway to Natchez. Discussed the unity of the southwest Mississippi region.

Willie White, Mayor of Port Gibson

- Thanked the City of Natchez for their support during the COVID pandemic. Discussed funding needs for future projects in Port Gibson and Claiborne County.

Anthony Walton, President, Jefferson County Board of Supervisors

- Discussed the infrastructure issues that Jefferson County has, but pointed out the opportunities that Highway 61 presents for development.

Kelvin T. King, Vice-President, Jefferson County Board of Supervisors

- Pointed out the need for a Safe Room in Jefferson County during inclement weather.

Kenyon Jackson, President, Wilkinson County Board of Supervisors

- Thanked the Lt. Gov. for his help in the litigation involving the county. Also asked for funding for improvements of Highway 24 corridor between Woodville and McComb.

Daye Dearing, Director, Women’s Business Center, Alcorn State University

- First Training scheduled for April 27th titled “10 Steps to Correctly Establish Your Business in Mississippi and Louisiana”.

Alderwoman Smith

- Points out a shortage of workers in the service industry specifically restaurants and asked the Lt. Gov. Hosemann if there is guidance or assistance available for this issue.

Lt. Gov. Hosemann

- Advises that there is funding in the Rescue Bill devoted to restaurants, specifically smaller restaurants, and encourages restraints to apply for that funding. Discusses the difficulties with unemployment legislation that stems from the varying success or failure of different industries throughout the pandemic. Anticipates economic incentive packages for businesses hit harder during the pandemic. Thanked the Mayor and those in attendance for their input.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Alderwoman Irving, seconded by Alderwoman Davis to adjourn the Special Call Board Meeting of April 14, 2021.



DAN GIBSON, MAYOR

ATTEST:



SERVIA FORTENBERRY, CITY CLERK