

Good Morning and Happy Friday Memphis!



The month of September is now upon us! Although we have modified our approach to many activities once considered routine, our drive to improve the City of Memphis for *all* residents has not changed. With that in mind, this week your Memphis City Council met to discuss measures focused on moving Memphis forward. If you were not able to virtually participate in the meeting via live-stream on the Council website, via YouTube, or via 88.5 FM (WQOX), a full review is provided, [here](#).

Funding Programming to Address Computer Literacy:

With school back in session, the Council realizes the COVID-19 pandemic creates educational challenges for Memphis youth and their families as instruction is conducted remotely through the use of laptops, tablets, and related electronic devices. Unfortunately, many of our Memphis youth, and their parents alike, lack the computer literacy skills required during this time. To address this issue, on Tuesday, the Council passed a resolution to fund the Office of Youth Services' Virtual Scholars and Parents Computer Literacy Program.

The Council action will ensure that no less than \$75,000, and up to \$250,000, is transferred from CARES Act Funds to support the program. Offered in collaboration with Memphis Public Libraries, the Memphis Urban League, Mentoring Youth Through Technology, and retired Shelby County Schools teachers, the program will assist the youth of the City of Memphis, i.e., those who are considered juveniles, visually impaired, hard-of-hearing, English Language Learners, and their parents.

Taken together, the measure seeks to further close the digital divide as it relates to our youngest generation and their educational success.

Enhancing COVID-19 Testing Initiatives:

On Tuesday, the Council also approved a resolution appropriating up to \$7,000,000 through the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund proceeds to move forward with efforts to enhance community and school-based COVID-19 testing. The effort is key as we work to protect the health of our community by implementing measures that prioritize testing participants, expedite the testing process, provide lower wait times, ultimately for the purpose of reducing coronavirus transmission rates within the City of Memphis.

Encouraging Governor Bill Lee to Suspend Eviction Proceedings:

The Council is aware of the hardships experienced by many Memphians at this time. Since March 2020, our actions have been aimed at offering relief where possible, oftentimes to the most vulnerable among us. On Tuesday, these efforts continued as the Council approved a resolution encouraging Tennessee Governor Bill Lee to suspend eviction proceedings for those who are (1) hospitalized and/or recovering under doctor's care from COVID-19, or (2) caring for children, or parents, hospitalized and/or recovering under doctor's care from COVID-19, for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In all, the action seeks to raise support for, and lend compassion to, citizens most affected by the virus' equally devastating health and economic impact.

Urging an Improved Community Development Block Grant Award Allocation Formula:

While the Council has its sights set on addressing citizens' immediate needs, we also have an eye toward necessary long-term reform, specifically regarding the Community Development Block Grant program ("CDBG"). Established in

1974, CDBG is one of the longest running programs within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It provides annual grants on a formula basis to local and state governments to address unique community development needs, including but not limited to economic development, housing rehabilitation, water and sewer, as well as health and safety projects within the awarded communities.

However, the City of Memphis has seen its CDBG award allocation decreased 37 percent from approximately \$13.1M to \$6.1M. Therefore, on Tuesday, the Council passed a resolution urging Tennessee Congressional leaders to push for the adoption of a single, and updated, formula that more accurately targets funds so that they are received by communities experiencing the most need.

In doing so, the Council calls for greater equity and effectiveness within the CDBG program, while also seeking a way to restore the funds historically utilized to support the City of Memphis.

Improving our Local Parks System:

Furthermore, the Council remains dedicated to the upkeep of our local parks system. To that end, on Tuesday, we approved a resolution to accept grant funds in the amount \$35,000 for improvements to the soccer mini-pitches at Willow, Bert Ferguson, and Gaisman Parks. The grant was funded by the U.S. Soccer Foundation and will work toward the personal health and athletic development of youth within the City of Memphis by offering additional resources dedicated to safe, structured, and free play.

Amending the City of Memphis Code of Ordinances:

On August 4, the Council established the City Council Renaming Commission to review street, park and public place names within the City of Memphis. Given twelve months, the Commission is tasked with producing a final report of its findings regarding any recommended street, park, or public place name changes. Per the resolution organizing the Commission, the final report of recommendations will be submitted to the Council, for the legislative body to act as it sees fit.

On Tuesday, as a follow-up to the August 4-action, the Council approved an ordinance amending Chapters 2 and 12 of the City of Memphis Code of Ordinances, so as to update the Code as it relates to street, park, and place names.

By way of Tuesday's ordinance amendment, the Council would possess the ability to change the official name adopted for City of Memphis streets, parks, and public places/property. In doing so, the measure will allow the Council to act upon the Commission's final report-based recommendations, if desired.

Taken together, the Council views the development as progress toward the larger goal of providing present-day representation to communities that were historically excluded from decisions concerning the naming of our revered public spaces, places, and venues.

Remembering Safety over the Labor Day Weekend:

Finally, as the Labor Day weekend approaches, please heed the advice of public health officials: wash your hands, maintain six feet social distance, and *wear your mask*. Doing so protects your well-being, as well as the safety of others within the City of Memphis and beyond.

Looking Forward:

As we move ahead, I am and will always be honored to serve you each day as part of a thirteen-councilmember team working to transform our great city into a place of opportunity for all. Stay tuned for future Council updates as we keep you informed regarding the activities taking place here at City Hall.

With earnest appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrice J. Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrice Jordan Robinson
Chairwoman, Memphis City Council
District 3