

Good Evening and Happy Friday Memphis!



In my last recap I stated **the best is yet to come**. I emphasized that belief because my determination to bring about an improved future for the City of Memphis is a cornerstone upon which I have, and always will, base my efforts. However, securing progress is hard work. Advancement takes time. Speaking on the topic, the late-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated that “human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable . . . every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.” Even today, as I reflect upon the ongoing fight for gender equality, Dr. King’s observations remain true.

This week our nation celebrated a milestone: 100 years since the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which granted women the right to vote. Nonetheless, as with many laws, exceptions existed. Although the 19th Amendment represented a pivotal moment in the betterment of American life, it did *not* affirmatively grant the vote to *all women*. In fact, African-American, Latina, Asian, and Indigenous women, alike, still found themselves systematically excluded from the ballot box due to voter suppression tactics over four decades *after* the amendment’s ratification.

As a result, the fight for women's suffrage did not, and could not, end on August 18, 1920. Ultimately, it would take the "tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated [women]," women like Fannie Lou Hamer, Diane Nash, Septima Poinsette Clark, Bernice Robinson, Amelia Boynton, and Ella Baker, just to name a few, to achieve the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which closed the gaps unaddressed years prior.

So, as we celebrate the anniversary of the 19th Amendment, let us also recognize the "sacrifice, suffering, and struggle" of the women of color who picked up the torch of advocacy after 1920 to ensure that the right to vote was enjoyed by *all*. As their past efforts continue to inspire our future endeavors, **the best is yet to come.**

**Photo: Councilwoman Michalyn Easter-Thomas, Representative Karen D. Camper, Chairwoman Patrice J. Robinson, Councilwoman Cheyenne Johnson, SCS Board Chairwoman Miska Clay Bibbs, SCS Board Member Stephanie P. Love, and Representative London Lamar.*

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With that in mind, on Tuesday your Memphis City Council met to discuss measures focused on moving Memphis forward. If you were not able to 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](#).

Protecting our Churches:

The City of Memphis is a historic place. Our streets, neighborhoods, as well as the buildings that abound, tell the story of our humble beginnings, and dramatic growth. Throughout the course of our development, one place has remained central to community life for many Memphians: the church. So, when the Council learned that certain places of worship were at risk of demolition, we took action.

In doing so, on Tuesday, the Council passed a resolution establishing a 180-day moratorium on the issuance of demolition permits of churches over fifty (50) years old on Summer Avenue. The measure is aimed at preserving the character of our diverse communities, as we work to retain the structures that have served our citizens for generations.

In the interim, the Council also requested (1) a report from the Office of Planning and Development outlining different uses available for the properties under less intense zoning districts, and (2) proposed zoning amendments that preserve historical church structures, or authorize similar uses. Taken together, we are excited as the approved resolution represents momentum focused upon the thoughtful, and appropriate utilization of our local edifices.

Grant Funding for the Division of Police Services:

The Council believes that the safety of our citizens is paramount. As such, on Tuesday, we were excited to accept, allocate, and appropriate grant funds from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services in the amount of \$9,823,624. The dollars will be used to hire and pay full-time salaries for police officers protecting and serving the City of Memphis.

Grant Funding for the Division of Fire Services:

Continuing on the topic of the importance of our public safety employees, the Council approved a resolution accepting and appropriating \$183,963.64 from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The funds will be used to provide personal protective equipment to the Division of Fire Services as they work to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus within the City of Memphis.

Additionally, a second resolution was approved accepting grant funds in the amount \$200,505.45, also from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The dollars will be used by the Division of Fire Services to protect the health and safety of the public, as well as firefighter personnel against fire and fire-related challenges.

Advocating on Your Behalf:

The COVID-19 public health crisis has affected our daily lives in various ways. As we work to address the unique needs of Memphis residents, we remain aware of the issues regarding access to public transportation. On Tuesday, the Council approved a resolution encouraging U.S. Congress to include, and financially support, public transit in future coronavirus relief legislation. In short, the measure is forward-looking, as our Congressmen and women work to create additional aid for citizens, businesses, universities, governments, and communities in need. The complexities of the global pandemic may remain for the time being; however, we firmly believe in the need to maintain

reliable and safe, public transportation options for Memphians travelling to and from work.

Improving our Valued Park System and Recreational Spaces:

The Council views our parks and recreational spaces as invaluable resources within our citizens' lives. However, to provide a benefit to Memphians in the long-term, these places must be maintained and improved. With that in mind, on Tuesday, the Council approved a series of resolutions aimed at supporting our valued park system and recreational spaces. First, a resolution was passed accepting grant funds in the amount of \$4,250 from the Tennessee Arts Commission as part of a creative placemaking award. The dollars will be used for professional services in support of an updated archway at Gaston Park. Second, a resolution was passed accepting grant funds in the amount of \$2,300, also from the Tennessee Arts Commission, as part of an arts access award. The dollars will be used to provide arts programming at Howze, Wilson, Southside, and Gaston parks. Next, a third resolution was passed accepting grant funds in the amount of \$12,574 from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. The dollars will be used for professional services to plant trees at McFarland Park. Finally, a fourth resolution was passed transferring, allocating, and appropriating \$479,515 for improvements to Leftwich Tennis Center.

Honoring Memphians Who Served:

When worthy circumstances arise, the Council has seen fit to name certain public roads in honor of citizens who have served this community. On Tuesday, the late-Rev. Dr. Steve Montgomery was recognized with an honorary street name change as a result of his legacy of faith and altruism.

Rev. Dr. Montgomery was a stalwart pastor and progressive leader who grew up in Richmond, Virginia, obtained his Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School, a Doctorate of Ministry from Columbia Theological Seminary, and was ordained in 1980. For over nineteen (19) years, he served as the pastor at Idlewild Presbyterian Church, leading his congregation with courage and gratitude.

Rev. Dr. Montgomery dedicated his life to respecting and protecting the basic human rights of peoples of all creeds, colors, national origins, and sexual identities. He was a beacon of hope, a source of inspiration, and with his untimely passing, he will be deeply missed.

On Tuesday, the Council extended its sincere condolences to the family of Rev. Dr. Montgomery, and memorialized our community's loss by designating Union Avenue between South Belvedere Boulevard and South McLean Boulevard as "**Reverend Dr. Steve Montgomery Street**" in appreciation for his dedication to the City of Memphis.

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 with a large initial "P".

Patrice Jordan Robinson
Chairwoman, Memphis City Council
District 3