

**Good Evening and Happy Thursday Memphis!**



Did you know **Minerva Johnican** became the first African American woman elected to the Memphis City Council in 1984? How about the fact that **Rev. James L. Netters, Fred L. Davis,** and **J.O. Patterson, Jr.** became the first African Americans elected to the Memphis City Council in 1968, establishing them as the first Black Memphians to hold elected office in our city government since 1882? Did you also know that **13 African American women** have served on the Memphis City Council since its inception, four of which held the role of Chairwoman, myself included? Furthermore, were you aware that of those 13 African American women, **5 are currently in-office**, providing the largest number of Black women serving concurrently on the Memphis City Council in our city's history? These electoral milestones were made possible because of an unwavering commitment to fighting for, securing, and then regularly exercising the fundamental right to vote. As we continue our observance of Black History Month 2020, join the Memphis City Council in celebrating this year's theme: "*African Americans and the Vote*," which draws a direct

correlation between inclusive access to the ballot box and forward civic progress.

Finally, if you were not able to attend Tuesday's Memphis City Council meeting, a full review can be found, [here](#).

### **Adding Proven Talent to the Economic Development Growth Engine Board:**

Tasked with providing and coordinating public resources to drive economic development in Memphis and Shelby County, the Economic Development Growth Engine (EDGE) is an invaluable agency in the effort to create jobs, improve the economy, revitalize neighborhoods, attract investments, spark innovation, and encourage entrepreneurship within our region. On Tuesday, the Memphis City Council enabled EDGE to further achieve its all-important mission by approving Mayor Jim Strickland's appointment of Former Councilwoman Gerre Currie to the EDGE Board of Directors. Former Councilwoman Currie is a native Memphian who attended Messick High School, Southwest Tennessee Community College, and the Barrett School of Banking, which provided her with a fine-tuned professional background in financial services. As a Memphis City Councilwoman, she represented the citizens of District 6 with efficacy, and abiding dedication, as she worked to ensure positive outcomes for all. We look forward to the positive impact Former Councilwoman Currie will have on the residents and businesses of Memphis and Shelby County as the newest member of the EDGE Board.

### **Envisioning an Enhanced Lamar Avenue:**

The Council views Memphis' public right-of-ways as venues for high-powered economic development. To that point, few major thoroughfares possess more potential than the Lamar Avenue corridor. Notwithstanding, the 8-mile stretch of roadway has historically been negatively affected by an overabundance of indistinguishable businesses, many of whom fail to (1) enhance the landscape and (2) address the unique needs of the neighborhoods in which they operate. On August 28, 2018, Councilwoman Jamita Swarengen successfully sponsored a resolution establishing a moratorium on the issuance of auto-related project authorizations on Lamar Avenue between Bellevue Boulevard and Winchester Road due to the high-volume of tire repair shops, service stations, auto repair shops, used auto sales businesses, and car washes taking root within proximity to each other. On Tuesday, that moratorium was extended 180 days. Ultimately, in partnership with the Office of Planning and Development, we intend to move forward with the process of achieving a comprehensive rezoning of Lamar Avenue. In all, we anticipate the Council

action will influence the growth of a new business environment that includes the addition of health clinics, grocery stores, and diverse enterprises that are more positively impactful to the area.

### **Ensuring Fairgrounds Redevelopment Success: (\*Corrected photo above)**

With a total of 18-acres of land located in the center of the City of Memphis, the Fairgrounds offers a premium space for the future of recreational sports within our region. However, with fewer than eight home games played at the Liberty Bowl during the Memphis Tiger Football Season, the larger Fairgrounds site is fully activated *only* 2.1% of the calendar year. That rate of *inactivity* is unacceptable. Redevelopment is needed, now. In response, on Tuesday, the Council aligned itself with the Administration, furthering the effort to revitalize the Fairgrounds into a destination recreation, retail, and entertainment center by transferring \$2.9M to the project for use in ensuring key predevelopment work. Once complete, the Fairgrounds will be a gem for the City of Memphis, its residents, and visitors, alike.

### **Improving Our Valued Park System:**

The Council is dedicated to improving our city's park system because we view our public recreational spaces as outlets for the growth and development of Memphis families and children. On Tuesday, we followed through on that objective by appropriating \$1.6M to improve parks and community centers across the City of Memphis to directly address playground resurfacing, as well as equipment and lighting needs.

### **Empowering Memphis Youth with Job Skills Development:**

Our city's youth are our future. To that point, the City of Memphis believes we must invest in their development early and often. The Administration's Office of Youth Services established [MPLOY to provide Memphis youth, ages 14-22, with meaningful summer employment opportunities](#). **The MPLOY Youth Summer Experience** offers various career path options according to the participants' strengths and interests, including soft skills training, entry-level positions, and internships. Furthermore, some of the top employers in Memphis make these experiences possible by agreeing to serve as business partners, offering structured job opportunities for six weeks during the summer months.

However, to date, the demand by Memphis youth seeking to participate in the 2020 MPLOY Youth Summer Experience has exceeded available program funds. As a result, monetary support is needed from our community. On

Tuesday, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated answered the call when they presented a check for \$3,600 to financially sponsor two additional summer internship participants. Notwithstanding, more students are awaiting support.

**My call to action is simple:** Contribute what you can today to empower Memphis youth with vital job skills development and training. Donations of any amount can be submitted to “**City of Memphis/JOY – 125 N. Main Street, Suite 700, Memphis TN 38103, Attn. Director Ike Griffith.**”

***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 style with a large, stylized initial "P".

Patrice Jordan Robinson  
Chairwoman, Memphis City Council  
District 3