

Honoring Legends and Legacies

The City of Memphis impacts the nation and the world in many ways, but one of its most notable influences has been in music. As the Home of the Blues, the cradle of Rock and Roll and a significant contributor to the Rap scene, the Bluff City is revered by connoisseurs of numerous music styles.

Soul music is no exception; and one of the most recognized names in that genre is, of course, the Reverend Al Green. Although he is a groundbreaking artist in many ways, **2022 marks the 50th Anniversary of one of Rev. Green's most well-known hits, the title track of his iconic record, "Let's Stay Together."** On Tuesday, your Memphis City Council passed a resolution honoring the impact of this song and the man who recorded it.

The Council also passed a resolution saluting Willie Mitchell, the pioneering record producer who provided Rev. Green with his breakthrough moment; and Mr. Mitchell's family, which includes music producers who continue to operate Memphis' Royal Studios today. To further these legacies, the Council heard a wonderful and spirited performance of "Let's Stay Together" from local musicians Gerald Richardson and Steve Bethany.



Chairwoman Jamita Swearingen and Willie Mitchell's son, Lawrence "Boo" Mitchell

Another arena in which Memphis is known is basketball. With the University of Memphis Tigers appearing in the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2014 and the

Grizzlies turning heads in the NBA, Memphis basketball is back on the scene in a big way. **The Council congratulated the Tigers for their impressive showing at the NCAA tournament with a big round of applause; way to go, Tigers!** The Council on Tuesday also honored another major achievement on the hoop front, passing a resolution honoring the **Christian Brothers High School Purple Wave basketball team for securing the TSSAA Division II-AA State Championship on March 5.**

Led by powerhouse Chandler Jackson and with four players scoring in double digits, the Purple Wave under the direction of Coach Bubba Lockett fought to its first State title since 1987. The achievement crowned an incredible 28-0 season for a team that has only seen one loss in the past two seasons. The Council saluted these extraordinary young men for their efforts that are a credit to the entire City.

Keeping you informed

In addition to representing the citizens of Memphis, passing laws and approving the City's budget, a major function of the City Council is **providing oversight to the various Divisions of City government – including Memphis Light, Gas and Water.** On Tuesday, the Council approved Mayor Jim Strickland's appointments of three new members and reappointments of two current members to the MLGW Board of Commissioners.

Councilmembers asked the new and returning board members about their willingness to work with the Council on the momentous decision of whether the City will continue its 83-year relationship with the Tennessee Valley Authority as its sole supplier of electric power. They also asked whether the appointees would make the good of MLGW ratepayers their ultimate guide in making decisions. Having received positive answers, the Council enthusiastically welcomed the candidates into their roles of governing MLGW.

Fighting Blight in Memphis

Of the streets, roadways and Interstates that run within the corporate limits of Memphis, approximately 17 are classified as State Routes or Interstate Highways. Recently, Councilmembers and their constituents have noticed a buildup of litter and/ or illegally dumped materials along the rights of way of many of these. While City crews pitch in to help keep them clean, the ultimate responsibility falls to the State. **On Tuesday, the City Council joined the Shelby County Commission in passing a Joint Resolution asking Gov. Bill Lee and the General Assembly to increase funding to the Tennessee Department of Transportation for regular roadside trash cleanup along these routes.** The Council hopes State leaders will heed the request for more funding to help keep these rights of way cleaner.

Of course, the City has its own areas of responsibility when it comes to cleaning up and fighting blight; and making sure these responsibilities are fulfilled is a major focus of this City Council. In Tuesday's Public Works, Solid Waste and General Services Committee, the Council heard a presentation on just that topic.

Public Works Director Robert Knecht gave a presentation on the City's Environmental Enforcement efforts, which focus on illegal dumping that impinges on the beauty and healthfulness of neighborhoods all across the City. **Director Knecht told the Council that the relatively new program is producing results, investigating instances of illegal dumping and ultimately bringing the violators into Environmental Court.**

As an example, he cited the recent cleanup of the "Washington Bottoms" area at the intersection of Covington Pike and Interstate 240. A concentrated effort by the Environmental Enforcement team and other elements of the City's Public Works Division resulted in the removal of 50 dump-truck loads of debris and the identification of 50 individual cases or violations. Your City Council will continue to oversee the progress of the litter/ illegal dumping cleanup efforts within the City.

Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance Relief


The Council understands that the negative economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic still linger for many Memphis citizens. Therefore, on Tuesday the Housing and Community Development Committee gave a positive recommendation to allocating an additional \$15,570,982.96 in federal funding for the HCD Division's Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance program. The City already has spent more than \$38 million in previous allocations of federal money on the program, and the additional funding is needed to serve additional citizens. Although this action will not be finalized until at least April 5, when the Council is set for its next meeting, **citizens who need this assistance are encouraged to check their eligibility and make preparations to apply by visiting www.home901.org.**

A moment of gratitude:

I am fortunate to serve you each day along with my colleagues working to advance our great city. Stay tuned for future Council updates as we keep you informed regarding the activities taking place here at City Hall. As always, for an archive of meeting recordings, you may visit <https://www.memphistn.gov/government/watch-public-meetings-online/>.



Yours in service,


Jamita Swearengen
Chairwoman, Memphis City Council
District 4