

We mourn and we rise

Greetings, Memphis. It has been a difficult period for our city since the Council's last meeting on Aug. 23. Nevertheless, to open our Sept. 13th meeting, the Council wanted to spotlight a few things to celebrate even during difficult days.

Sept. 15 - Oct. 15 is National Hispanic Heritage Month. During this time each year, the City celebrates the far-ranging achievements and contributions of our residents who come, or whose ancestors came, from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. There are more than 65,000 people of Hispanic origin in Shelby County, and the Council would like to recognize the many cultural, social, political, artistic, and culinary contributions they have made here, as we see the influences in every aspect of our daily lives.

At the Sept. 13th meeting, the Council saw a rousing performance from Cazateatro bilingual theater group. The celebration will continue at Latin Fest 2022, a family-oriented festival featuring Latin music, food, crafts and fun. The event will take place from noon to 6 PM Saturday, Sept. 24, at Overton Square. For more information, visit [Latin Fest 2022](#).



Members of Cazateatro gave a performance at the Council's Sept. 13th meeting.

Councilman JB Smiley, Jr. brought forward a Resolution honoring Stan Bell, who is not only an icon on Memphis airwaves but also in local education. Mr. Bell is known throughout the community from his stints on local radio stations WDIA, V101 and Hallelujah FM, and now hosts “The Stan Bell Morning Show” on WDIA, where he carries on the legacy of the legendary Bobby O’Jay. Mr. Bell recently retired after twenty-nine (29) years with legacy Memphis City Schools and now Memphis & Shelby County Schools, having taught English and Applied Economics at Northside High School and broadcasting at Wooddale High School.

And all Council members signed on to a Resolution congratulating Dr. Melissa Collins for her recent selection as 2022-2023 Tennessee Teacher of the Year by the Tennessee Department of Education. She also was chosen for the 2022 Tennessee History Teacher of the Year, an award given by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. A 21-year, National Board-Certified veteran of the school system, Dr. Collins now will represent Tennessee in the National Teacher of the Year competition. The Council was honored to recognize these Memphians who have worked daily to give the youth of our city a better future.

Council at Work

After recent events here in Memphis, many of us are looking for a vision of a better future. The recent kidnapping and murder of a young woman from one of our streets and a random, citywide shooting rampage that left three people dead shocked a city already all-too familiar with violent crime.

When your City Council gathered on Sept. 13th for its Regular Meeting, we did so with a new resolve to seek new perspectives on and new solutions to our city’s longstanding crime problem. In discussion with representatives of the Memphis Police Department, we looked at the idea that addressing this problem is not simply a matter of more policing; it must be a concerted effort between the City, County, law enforcement, the courts, Memphis Shelby County Schools, and organizations seeking to tackle the social ills often at the root of crime.

Even while looking at the larger picture, though, we understand this is a long-term undertaking – and Memphis citizens want some short-term solutions. To that end, the Council passed a Resolution brought by District 1 Councilwoman Rhonda Logan and co-sponsored by all Members, requesting immediate assistance of fifty (50) Tennessee Highway Patrol troopers and Shelby County Sheriff deputies to supplement MPD operations.

The Resolution asks that the troopers and deputies work in Memphis for a minimum of six (6) weeks. While this will not solve all our problems and is only a temporary measure, we believe that should the State and County agree to our request, it would help Memphians to feel somewhat safer in the immediate future.

Longer-term, Memphis Police Chief Cerelyn “CJ” Davis told the Council’s Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee that currently, MPD has about 1,930 commissioned officers. She said there is a class of about 96 recruits currently going through the Police Academy, and MPD Leadership believes most, or all of these will graduate – meaning the Department will have a force of around 2,000 by January 1, 2023. This is still well short of the 2,500-officer goal set by the Council and Mayor in 2021, but it is a solid number on which to build.

Echoing the observations of several Council Members, Public Safety Committee Chair Logan said the Committee will continue to discuss ways to address the City’s crime issues. Council Members expressed their resolve to do whatever it takes to adequately deal with the problem. Please be assured your Council is committed to doing our part in protecting your safety and helping restore your peace of mind.

Focusing on Pedestrian Safety

In another move toward protecting safety, the Council approved an appropriation of \$65,000 for traffic safety improvements at the intersection of Sam Cooper and East Parkway. Specifically, the money will be used to install LED Flashing Pedestrian Advance Warning signage on all approaches at the intersection. It also will be used to install Video Detection with passive pedestrian detection capability, which will detect pedestrians in the crosswalk and signal the controller to allow all allocated pedestrian crossing time, even if the crossing button has not been pushed.

On July 27, 14-year-old William McConnell was struck and killed by a car while attempting to cross at Sam Cooper and East Parkway. Since then, William’s family has worked with Councilman Ford Canale, who sponsored the Resolution, to get safety improvements at the intersection. Some of William’s friends and family members spoke at the Council’s Sept. 13th meeting, expressing gratitude for the improvements, but challenging us to continue working to improve pedestrian safety throughout the city. Council members will continue to work with the Engineering Division to appropriate additional funds for traffic safety projects around the city.

The Bottom Line:

I am honored by the opportunity to work with my fellow Council Members to enhance this city we call home. 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 and view our [Council Meetings here](#).



For Memphis,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martavius D. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Martavius D. Jones,
Chairman, Memphis City Council