



**MARTAVIUS D. JONES**  
CHAIRMAN  
MEMPHIS CITY COUNCIL

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***New Year, new challenges –  
and new opportunities***

**Happy 2023, Memphis!**

Coming off a holiday period that included some unexpected and unpleasant complications caused by Mother Nature, your Memphis City Council hit the ground running on Tuesday, Jan. 10 with an agenda that included small details on some routine, straightforward items and some big news for one of our inner-city neighborhoods.

But first, about those complications: In our Memphis Light, Gas and Water Committee on January 10, the still-new MLGW President (formerly Memphis Chief Operating Officer) Doug McGowen gave a recap of the circumstances that led to the disruptions experienced by some MLGW customers over the holidays. President McGowen said that the extremely cold (extremely quickly) weather on December 22-24 created a record demand for the Tennessee Valley Authority's power generation systems. Coupled with some generation system failures brought about by the cold, this necessitated the TVA's first-ever mandate for rolling blackouts by its local systems. The frigid temperatures also affected some of MLGW's systems meant to reactivate circuits following such a blackout, which further inconvenienced some customers.

At the same time, the freeze and subsequent thaw caused thousands of pipes, including dozens of MLGW mains, to burst around the city. The resulting low water pressures triggered State requirements for a boil-water advisory for all MLGW water customers. Although MLGW crews worked round-the-clock to locate and repair the leaks, allowing the system pressure to come back up and the water to be recertified as safe by the State, the advisory lasted several days. The Council was one of several organizations, including MLGW, that helped distribute bottled water to assist the impacted customers.

While being sympathetic to customers' frustrations, President McGowen noted that, had not some infrastructure improvements already been made under MLGW's five-year plan formulated (with Council-approved funding) in 2020, the situation likely would have been worse. Nevertheless, he said the utility will continue to have discussions, both internally and with TVA, to see how systems can be further improved to withstand and respond to extreme weather events.



**From left: District 1 Councilwoman Rhonda Logan, District 7 Councilwoman Michalyn Easter-Thomas (on right in middle picture), Super District 8-2 Councilwoman Cheyenne Johnson and Super District 8-1 Councilman JB Smiley, Jr. were among the Councilmembers who helped distribute the packaged water allotted to the Council.**

**Council at Work**

**Exploring concerns about Ethylene Oxide** – From TVA to EPA: The Council also heard from another Federal agency at its January 10 meeting. Caroline Freeman, Director of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Region 4 (which includes Memphis) gave a presentation on the EPA’s concerns and rectification efforts at a South Memphis industrial facility. Ms. Freeman said the EPA has detected concerning levels of the chemical ethylene oxide emitting from the Sterilization Services of Tennessee plant on Florida Street. Ethylene oxide (EtO) is a colorless, odorless gas used to sterilize medical and dental equipment.

Since 2016, the EPA has learned that the chemical may be causing elevated cancer risks among people who live near facilities that emit EtO. According to the Agency’s analysis, some areas within Sterilization Service’s effects boundary may have a lifetime cancer risk of up to 2,000 per 1 million people – while the EPA’s threshold for concern is 100 in 1 million. However, Ms. Freeman said, under the current regulations, Sterilization Services of Tennessee is not committing any violations. The EPA is working to draft new regulations on the use of ethylene oxide and hopes to issue a Final Rule this year. In the meantime, concerned citizens may find more information on EPA’s website at:

[US EPA-Memphis, TN \(Sterilization Services of TN\).](https://www.epa.gov/region4/sterilization-services-tn)

**A CLT for Orange Mound** – While the EPA works to protect those South Memphis residents from potentially dangerous environmental pollutants, the City’s Division of Housing and Community Development has been working to preserve the ability of historically disadvantaged people to own a home in the Orange Mound community. At last Tuesday’s meeting, the Council approved a Resolution to accept, appropriate and allocate \$400,000 in grant funds for the establishment of ABODE, a Community Land Trust (CLT) in Orange Mound.

A Community Land Trust is a private, non-profit organization that purchases land in an area with the purpose of promoting and preserving affordable housing development, often particularly intended for historically disadvantaged populations. ABODE is designed for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) residents. It is a platform through which families who would otherwise be unable to own a home can do so and, at the same time, preserve Orange Mound's land and property investments. The \$400,000 grant came through the Living Cities Closing the Gaps Network, a ten-year initiative committed to closing racial inequities in income, wealth building, and access to affordable housing.

**Big Investment for Uptown** – The Council approved a Joint Resolution with the Shelby County Board of Commissioners to help secure affordable housing in the Uptown area. The Resolution authorizes the Memphis/ Shelby County Community Redevelopment Agency to issue up to \$12 million in obligations to fund projects in the Uptown Community Redevelopment Plan. Repayment for the obligations would come from the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district previously established for Uptown.

Proceeds from this action are planned for allocation to four projects in the Uptown Community Redevelopment Plan:

- Approximately \$2.2 million for rehabilitation of the historic Collins Chapel Connectional Hospital and Clinic as affordable housing for the homeless, particularly homeless families and the medically fragile. The estimated completion date for this project is 2023.
- \$6 million in gap financing for the Edgeview at Legends, a housing community for seniors, particularly those with limited means. Its expected completion date is 2024.
- \$3 million to a Home Repair program for current homeowners within the Uptown TIF. Since 2018, the CRA already has completed 75 home rehabilitation projects for Uptown homeowners. The \$3 million is the first installment of an 8-year commitment to this project.
- \$3 million for affordable homes in Uptown. Working with Promise Development, Habitat for Humanity, and other partners, the CRA has funded 50 such homes since 2018. There are 27 currently in the works, and the Agency has a goal of at least 40 affordable new homes annually over the next eight years.

**Showing the City C.A.R.E.s** – The Council also initiated an investment in mental health assistance in the city. A Resolution brought by Councilman Chase Carlisle and unanimously approved by the Council allocated and appropriated \$1.5 million in unused American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds (originally allocated to Employee Premium Pay) to the Memphis Fire Division for its Crisis

Assessment and Response to Emergencies (C.A.R.E.) Team program. A C.A.R.E. Team is a three-person mental health response unit consisting of a MFD firefighter/paramedic, a master's level crisis assessor from Alliance Healthcare Services, and a Memphis Police Department officer with Crisis Intervention Team training. The C.A.R.E. teams are equipped to respond to incidents involving non-violent subjects with mental health issues. Having such teams available frees other MPD officers to respond to non-mental health-related calls, as well as helping to ensure quality service to those who call with a mental health crisis.

**Making it Official** – At the January 10 meeting, the Council approved Mayor Jim Strickland's appointment of Judge Jayne Chandler as Administrative Judge for the City of Memphis Municipal Court. A lifelong Memphian, Judge Chandler graduated from Hamilton High School, then received a bachelor's degree from Tennessee State University and a Juris Doctorate from Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University. She started as an Assistant City Prosecutor in 1994, and in 1995 she was elected to serve as Memphis Municipal Court Judge, Division III. She has retained this seat through five elections. At the Dec. 20 meeting of the Council's Personnel and Government Affairs Committee, it was noted that Judge Chandler has been serving as the de facto administrator of City courts, and Councilmembers were proud to make the position official.

### **The Bottom Line**

Your Memphis City Council by Ordinance meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month unless holidays or official activities necessitate a change. The Council's complete 2023 Meeting Schedule is available on the Council's website, [Memphis City Council](#). I am optimistic about the year ahead of us and look forward to a prosperous year for those we serve. 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'.

Martavius D. Jones,  
Chairman, Memphis City Council