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## ***Listening – and responding – to calls for change***

**Greetings, Memphis.** Over the last two weeks, since news of Tyre Nichols’ death at the hands of (now former) Memphis Police officers, your Memphis City Council members have been listening to calls from justifiably outraged advocates for meaningful reforms in local public safety practices – listening and responding. At the Tuesday, Feb. 7 Council meeting, members introduced numerous pieces of legislation aimed at making the Memphis Police Department more transparent and accountable to the public, and at changing the way MPD responds to traffic violations.

### **Council at Work**

**Taking Action on Police Reform** – The Council approved two Resolutions on the subject, which will go into effect immediately. One, brought by Councilman JB Smiley, seeks to establish substantiated incidents of misuse of body worn cameras as disqualifying factors in MPD’s promotional process; and substantiated incidents of excessive and unnecessary force as grounds for termination from MPD. Because under the City Charter, MPD personnel policies ultimately fall under the Mayor’s jurisdiction, it will be up to the Mayor to determine whether to comply with the Council’s wish, as expressed in the Resolution.

The second Resolution is a show of support to the U.S. Congress for passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. This Federal bill for police reform at the national level provides several new provisions to safeguard citizens from police use of excessive force. Among these are ending qualified immunity (which prohibits bringing civil suits against police officers accused of misconduct), reforming legal standards that make it difficult to prosecute officers, creating a national police misconduct registry to prevent rehiring of terminated officers, prohibiting “racial (or otherwise discriminatory) profiling” and mandating training against such, and providing federal money for the creation of commissions to study police reform.

The Council also approved the First Readings of six Ordinances dealing with policing in Memphis. By City Charter, ordinances require three readings in public meetings before they become law. Among the Ordinances approved on First Reading were:

- An Ordinance to establish a procedure for the Memphis Police Department to conduct an annual independent review of the Police Training Academy and all training techniques
- An Ordinance amending the City of Memphis Code of Ordinances Vehicle and Traffic Code to clarify appropriate methods of enforcement of traffic violations
- An Ordinance to amend the City of Memphis Code of Ordinances ... to Require the Division of Police Services to use Only Appropriately Marked Law Enforcement Vehicles to Conduct Traffic Stops
- An Ordinance to establish a Public Safety Reporting Protocol in regard to the disposition by the Memphis Police Department of Recommendations by the Civilian Law Enforcement Review Board (CLERB) to the (MPD) regarding CLERB's disposition of complaints involving police misconduct, the use of deadly force by police officers and deaths and injuries of persons occurring while in police custody
- An Ordinance to establish an Independent Review Process of Memphis Police Department Incidents involving the use of Excessive, Unnecessary and or Deadly Force by Police Officers and Deaths or Serious Injuries of Persons Occurring while in Police Custody
- An Ordinance to Amend the City of Memphis Code of Ordinances Relating to Public Safety for the City of Memphis Law Enforcement to Collect and Regularly Report Data Regarding Traffic Stops, Arrests, Use of Force, and Complaints

You can find the complete text of each Resolution and Ordinance [here](#). As I noted, the Feb. 7 meeting was the first of three readings on Ordinances. Although we typically do not have debate or public input into the First and Second Readings of Ordinances, we are altering that policy due to the intense public interest. Citizens spoke on the First Reading on Feb. 7, and we expect to hear from more on the Second and Third Readings. There also likely will be amendments to the Ordinances based on public input and Council debate during the process.

We on the Council fully realize these measures will not wholly fix the deep-seated issues that contributed to Mr. Nichols' death. But every journey begins with a step, and we believe these are steps in the right direction. We also realize not everyone will always agree with our decisions as a Council. We encourage you to email Council members with your feedback. Nevertheless, we on the Council will continue to do our best to ensure the rights of all Memphians are protected – regardless of age, race, religion, gender, or the neighborhood in which one lives.



**Pastor Dianne Young spoke for the family of Bishop William M. Young after the Council presented the Bishop posthumously with the 2022 Memphis City Council Humanitarian Award.**

**Honoring a Humanitarian** – On the subject of working for every Memphian, at the Feb. 7 meeting, the City Council honored a man who spent much of his life doing just that. The late Bishop William M. Young was the recipient of the 2022 Memphis City Council Humanitarian Award. At our recent meeting, we presented the award to members of his family, including his wife, Pastor Dianne Young.

Along with Pastor Young, Bishop Young co-hosted “On the Road to Healing,” on Memphis’ WLOK 1340 AM on Sunday mornings; they also co-hosted “Memphis on the Air, Night Talk,” a nightly public affairs call-in show; and Bishop Young was a weekly guest on “Let’s Talk About It,” a talk show addressing emotional and spiritual issues. Having obtained degrees in Ministry and Counseling, Bishop Young served in ministry for 46 years and as a counselor for 40 years. He wrote a book entitled, *The Mourning After* based on his years of working with grief and loss issues.

Bishop Young was Bishop and Senior Pastor of The Healing Center Full Gospel Baptist Church and CEO of The Healing Word Counseling Center. He also served as the first African American Staff Chaplain at Methodist Health Systems in Memphis from June 1981 to July 1994; and in 2003, he founded the National Suicide and the Black Church Conference, which has grown to an attendance of 450 participants from over 20 states.

Although Bishop Young passed away on Oct. 10 of last year, the Council was proud to present to his family the 2022 Memphis City Council Humanitarian Award for his amazing contributions in community service and for his impact on the City of Memphis.

### **The Bottom Line**

There is no question these are troubled times in which we live. Yet, I am encouraged when I consider people like Bishop Young – and realize there are thousands like him throughout Memphis who still love their fellow man despite the fear and discord that seeks to tear the fabric of our civic life apart. May Bishop Young’s spirit remind us that even in the midst of darkness, hope yet remains with the faith of those who love this city and the people within it.

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