

**CITY OF OCEAN SPRINGS - MAYOR & BOARD OF ALDERMEN
REGULAR MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2025 - MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

Be it remembered that the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Ocean Springs met in a Regular Meeting at City Hall at 6:00 p.m. on September 2, 2025. Mayor Cox presided, and Aldermen Tillis, Stennis, Wade, Hinton, Pfeiffer, Blackman, and Messenger were present. City Attorney David Harris, Jr., City Clerk/Finance Director Christine Millard, Deputy City Clerk Vicky Hupe, City Accountant Kelly Riff, Police Chief Steven Dye, Fire Chief A.J. Fitch, Building Official Darrell Stringfellow, Public Works Director Allan Ladnier, Human Resources & Risk Management Director Mindy McDowell, Planning Director Amanda Crose, Parks & Recreation Director Stephen Glorioso, Project Manager Sarah Harris, and Executive Administrator & Public Affairs Officer Laurri Garcia were also present.

The Mayor called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Parks & Recreation Director gave the invocation and Alderman Messenger led the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to accept the agenda.

PROCLAMATION

a. September 2025 - "National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month"

The Mayor declared September 2025 "National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month".

PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. Fiscal Year 2025 - 2026 Budget

- Adopt a Resolution Fixing the Tax Levy for FY 2025 - 2026

A motion was made by Alderman Hinton, seconded by Alderman Blackman, and unanimously carried to open the Public Hearing.

The City Clerk/Finance Director presented a PowerPoint providing an overview of the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Municipal Budget, covering the General Fund, Enterprise Fund, and the Food & Beverage 2% Tax Fund. She reported that increases in property values are projected to generate additional revenue and recommended no increase in the current City millage rate of 28.92. She noted that the Ocean Springs School District requested a millage of 65.76, bringing the total combined levy to 94.68 mills. She further highlighted a proposed 3% cost-of-living adjustment citywide (\$495,000) and proposed longevity pay (\$250,000), noting that personnel costs comprise

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approximately 68% of the General Fund budget. The proposed FY26 General Fund budget totals \$19,014,097.05.

She also reviewed notable departmental adjustments, including one-time reductions in the Mayor and Board of Aldermen budget, proposed funding for diagnostic equipment in Public Works, and increased costs for fire uniforms and equipment. Additionally, she explained that revenue from the 2% Food & Beverage Tax is restricted by state law for use in promoting tourism, recreation, economic development, and public safety.

Public Input:

William Betterton suggested that all overtime requests be approved by the Mayor rather than by individual department heads.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Hinton, and unanimously carried to close the Public Hearing.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman and seconded by Alderman Stennis to adopt a Resolution Fixing the Tax Levy for FY 2025-2026 (**RES 2025-19**). The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

Aye: Alderman Tillis, Alderman Stennis, Alderman Wade, Alderman Pfeiffer, Alderman Blackman, Alderman Messenger, Alderman Hinton

Nay: None

- b. 3420 Groveland Road – PIDN: 60127330.050 – Requesting a zoning change from RMH Mobile Home Parks to C-H Regional Commercial; PC recommends approval

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Hinton, and unanimously carried to open the Public Hearing.

The Planning Director explained that the subject property is located across from Ocean Springs Station Apartments and abuts Harper Grove Townhomes to the west. She stated the requested change to C-H Regional Commercial zoning is the most intense commercial use district, allowing retail, hotel, education, office, and residential development. The property consists of approximately 1.15 acres and is currently vacant. Surrounding properties to the east, west, and south are zoned C-H Regional Commercial. She noted there were no letters or speakers in opposition at the Planning Commission meeting, and the Planning Commission recommended approval of the rezoning from RMH Mobile Home Parks to C-H Regional Commercial.

Rickey Sutherland spoke in favor of the zoning change.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Stennis, and unanimously carried to close the Public Hearing.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Hinton, and unanimously carried to approve the zoning change from RMH Mobile Home Parks to

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C-H Regional Commercial at 3420 Groveland Road (PIDN: 60127330.050).

AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Taylor Pontius (Agenda Item 6-a) requested that the state of emergency be removed and suggested implementing private security for downtown bars, ABC ID recognition scanner use, bartender training, weapons prevention measures, and a public/private partnership with the Police Department.

William Betterton spoke on four agenda items:

(Agenda Item 6-a) requested that the state of emergency be removed and stated businesses should not be punished.

(Agenda Item 7-a) spoke against entering into a one-year contract with the interim City Attorney.

(Agenda Item 8-dd) stated the Code Enforcement Officer needs additional support and questioned why noncompliant businesses have not been shut down.

(Agenda Items 8-h / 11-a) spoke against the Mayor's veto of the resolution.

Joe Jewell spoke on three agenda items:

(Agenda Items 8-h / 11-a) requested that the Board override the Mayor's veto.

(Agenda Item 7-a) spoke against entering into a one-year contract with the interim City Attorney.

(Agenda Item 6-a) spoke in favor of a business/city partnership and removing the state of emergency.

Jon Hitchcock (Agenda Item 8-h) requested an explanation of the Mayor's veto.

Mike Illanne (Agenda Item 7-a) spoke against entering into a one-year contract with the interim City Attorney and requested that the City employ a full-time City Attorney.

Brian Rose (Agenda Item 7-a) spoke against entering into a one-year contract with the interim City Attorney, citing issues with the RFP process and conflict of interest checks.

L. B. Wilson (Agenda Item 6-a) spoke in favor of removing the restrictions and state of emergency.

Julia Illanne (Agenda Item 6-a) spoke in favor of keeping the restrictions or making them more restrictive.

After the 30-minute timer expired, the Mayor allowed one final speaker.

Aaron Getz (Agenda Item 6-a) spoke in favor of removing the state of emergency and lifting the restrictions, stating it was a rash decision that hurt business owners.

OLD BUSINESS

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a. August 26th Proclamation and Order of a Man-made Emergency

The Mayor stated that after three days of discussions with Aldermen, business and bar owners, and residents, it was agreed that waiting for a “third strike” incident was not an option. He apologized if businesses were affected but explained that taking action to prevent a potential shooting during the holiday weekend was their only choice. He noted that the holiday weekend circumstances made it an emergency decision that had to be made. He further stated that the emergency is now over and the order will be lifted, but requested that bar owners work with the City to develop a long-term solution.

Alderman Blackman made a motion to terminate the Proclamation and Order of a Man-made Emergency but rescinded it in favor of a more in-depth motion prepared by Alderman Hinton.

A motion was made by Alderman Hinton, seconded by Alderman Tillis, and unanimously carried to lift/rescind the Proclamation and Order of a Man-made Emergency, to ensure that there will be additional police presence, and to proceed through the collaborative process of updating the City’s ordinances.

b. Parliamentary Procedure Workshop and Training Options

The City Clerk/Finance Director stated that the MS State Extension is offering a Foundations of Municipal Government class in Hattiesburg on October 2nd. She also noted that Jason Camp has offered to conduct a class in Ocean Springs; however, it would require a unanimous vote of the Board and a list of explicit topics to be covered.

No action was taken.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Legal Services Contract

The interim City Attorney stated that he was appointed interim City Attorney on June 17th, which is only valid for 90 days pursuant to Mississippi Code Annotated § 21-15-41. He noted that the interim term will expire on September 17th without an appointment to a one-year term as provided in § 21-15-25. He added that the proposed Professional Services Agreement is for the period of September 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026, to coincide with the fiscal year, and includes a 30-day termination provision.

A motion was made by Alderman Hinton, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to approve the Professional Services Agreement with the David N. Harris, Jr. Law Firm, PLLC for legal services to the City of Ocean Springs for the term September 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026 with a 30-day termination clause, and go out for RFQs or RFPs for City Attorney.

CONSENT AGENDA

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A motion was made by Alderman Wade, seconded by Alderman Tillis, and unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda except for items 8-j pulled by Alderman Pfeiffer and 8-r pulled by Alderman Blackman.

Mayor/BOA:

- a. Authorize and waive all associated costs for the Distinguished Gentlemen of Ocean Springs to host a community food drive at the Ryan Youth Center on Saturday, September 6, 2025, beginning at 7:00 a.m. until completion; to advertise the resources of the city
- b. Approve the Run, Walk, Bike Permit Application for SMATF Bridge-for-Life on September 6, 2025, from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., at the OS Bridge/Front Beach Route, at no cost to the City, the applicant pays the associated event cost
- c. Authorize and waive all associated costs for the Mississippi Songwriters Alliance to use the Community Center on Friday, September 19, 2025, to host a luncheon and check-in for out-of-town guest songwriters; to advertise the resources of the city
- d. Authorize and waive all associated costs for The Krewe of Unique to host a free luncheon for all of the City of Ocean Springs employees at the Ryan Youth Center on Friday, September 12, 2025, from 11:00a.m.-1:00 p.m.; to advertise the resources of the city
- e. Approve the Run, Walk, Bike Permit Application for St. Alphonsus Night of Neon 2025 on November 7, 2025, from 5:15 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., the Night of Neon Route, at no cost to the City, the applicant pays the associated event cost
- f. Authorize and waive all associated fees for Jackson County's Distinguished Young Women Program to use the Senior Center on January 18, February 1, and February 15, 2026, from 1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.; to advertise the resources of the city
- g. Authorize a \$500 sponsorship for the Friends of Jackson County Animal Shelter Pets 8th Annual "Paddle for Paws Poker Float" on September 13, 2025
- h. Acknowledgment of Mayoral Veto action taken on August 28, 2025, vetoing the August 19, 2025, motion made by Alderman Pfeiffer and seconded by Alderman Stennis to adopt the Resolution Establishing a Resolution Numbering System, which included the reinstatement of the sponsorship line

City Clerk:

- i. Accept the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Municipal Audit by Alexander, Van Loon, Sloan, Levens, Farve, PLLC (AVL) presented at the August 19th meeting
- j. Adopt Resolution to open the Uniform Assessment Schedule and set a public hearing for September 16, 2025

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer, seconded by Alderman Blackman, and

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unanimously carried to adopt Resolution (**RES 2025-020**) to open the Uniform Assessment Schedule and set a public hearing for September 16, 2025, changing the "state tax commission" to "Department of Revenue".

- k. Approve Minutes: Special Call Meeting July 7, 2025
- l. Approve Minutes: Regular Meeting August 5, 2025
- m. Approve Minutes: Special Call Meeting August 6, 2025
- n. Approve Minutes: Special Call Meeting August 13, 2025
- o. Approve Minutes: Special Work Session August 18, 2025
- p. Ratify check 133843 to Premier Landscaping for \$1,400.00 for Highway 90 Median Landscaping

Police Department:

- q. Authorize Employee #2618 for Out-of-State travel to Tuscaloosa, AL for Taser Instructor Course from September 28 – October 1, 2025
- r. Authorize the Police Chief to execute the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ocean Springs School District Police Department to utilize OSPD's PTS CAD and RMS software system

Alderman Blackman pulled item 8-r and said it needed to be tabled for further review.

Human Resources/Risk Management:

- s. Authorize update of the Administrative & Community Relations Coordinator title to Executive Administrator & Public Affairs Officer, which more accurately represents the dual role of the position
- t. Accept the resignation of Planning Technician Hannah Sullivan, effective August 15, 2025, and authorize beginning the process of filling the vacancy
- u. Authorize removing Patrolman Chance Johnson from probationary status to full-time status, effective September 4, 2025
- v. Authorize extension of the probationary period for employee #2735 by six months, to May 10, 2026
- w. Accept the retirement of Heavy Equipment Operation Supervisor Daniel Spicer, effective September 30, 2025, and authorize beginning the process of filling the vacancy

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC):

- x. Accept HPC Minutes for the July 3, 2025 Meeting
- y. Approve a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to replace the existing shingle roof with a standing seam metal roof at 908 Calhoun Street PIDN: 60137404.000; HPC recommends approval
- z. Approve a request for a COA to demolish the existing enclosed rear porch at

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1208 Bowen Ave PIDN: 61190012.000; HPC recommends approval

- aa. Approve a request for a COA for a time extension to install a 3.5 to 4-foot-tall wrought iron fence that was approved on April 13, 2023, at 605 Porter Ave PIDN: 60137628.000; HPC recommends approval

Project Manager:

- bb. Authorize the Mayor to execute the agreement between the City of Ocean Springs and Seymour Engineering for the Highway 90 Widening Utility Relocations

Building Department:

- cc. Approve the Building Official's recommendations for the tree applications received through August 27, 2025
- dd. Accept Code Enforcement Report through September 2, 2025

Parks & Recreation Department:

- ee. Approve Facility Use Agreement for YMCA Soccer program use of Freedom Field from August 11th to October 4, 2025
- ff. Approve Facility Use Agreement for Ocean Springs Girls Lacrosse use of Gay Lemon Park from September 30th to November 30, 2025
- gg. Approve Facility Use Agreement for Ocean Springs Baseball Organization use of Highway 57 Sports Complex, Pine Street, Alice Street, and Clay Boyd Park from September 1st to December 1, 2025
- hh. Approve Facility Use Agreement for Ocean Springs Softball use of Gay Lemon and Highway 57 Sports Complex from September 10th to December 1, 2025
- ii. Approve Facility Use Agreement for P360 Performance Sports use of Highway 57 Sports Complex from August 25th to December 1, 2025
- jj. Approve Facility Use Agreement for SMSC use of Highway 57 Sports Soccer Complex from September 1, 2025 to May 30, 2026

Public Works:

- kk. Adopt a Resolution to sell surplus scrap metal with a value of less than One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00) in accordance with Mississippi Code Annotated § 17-25-25

Adopted (**RES 2025-021**)

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

- a. City Clerk: Approve payment: Docket of Claims, all expenditures are appropriate and authorized by law, and spread the summary on the Minutes

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Hinton, and

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unanimously carried to approve the Docket of Claims, finding that all expenditures are appropriate and authorized by law, and to spread the summary on the minutes.

b. City Clerk: Accept the Monthly Budget Report

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to accept the monthly budget report.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Ronald McDonald, Joe Jewell, James Lewis, Julia Illanne, and William Betterton addressed the Mayor and Board.

Alderman Blackman stepped out of the Boardroom at 7:42 p.m. during Public Comment and returned one minute later while Public Comment was still ongoing.

MAYOR AND ALDERMEN'S FORUM

Alderman Tillis stated that several good points were brought up during Public Comment regarding the safety of the downtown area. He said that over the next few weeks, the Board will be working on plans and implementing solutions to make downtown safer and more secure by collaborating with bar owners and residents.

Alderman Stennis requested that the committees for the review of the Unified Development Code (UDC) and City ordinances move forward with being created. She also asked when parking signage would be installed for the 1515 Ocean Springs parking garage. The Mayor responded that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the parking garage is still being finalized but that recent progress has been made.

Alderman Wade thanked the Police and Fire Chiefs for their presence and efforts in keeping everyone safe over the weekend.

Alderman Pfeiffer thanked the Public Works Department for cleaning the canals on Beverly Place.

a. Alderman Pfeiffer: Response to Mayoral Veto of Resolution - Request to Override the Mayor's Veto

Alderman Pfeiffer made a motion to override the Mayor's veto; however, the motion died for lack of a second.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to authorize the Mayor to execute the Right of Use agreement with Hancock Whitney beginning at 4:00 p.m. on October 8, 2025, and ending at 5:00 p.m. on October 12, 2025, for the Cruisin' the Coast event.

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A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to authorize the Mayor to execute the Right of Use agreement with Hancock Whitney beginning at 4:00 p.m. on November 7, 2025, and ending at 5:00 p.m. on November 9, 2025, for the Peter Anderson Festival event.

Alderman Blackman noted that the moratorium on multifamily permits has expired and requested that the City Attorney review the process for reinstating the moratorium.

Alderman Messenger thanked the Executive Administrator & Public Affairs Officer for her excellent communication efforts on behalf of the City since joining the staff. The Mayor agreed and expressed appreciation as well.

Alderman Hinton thanked City staff and the residents who attend meetings and speak out on issues affecting the community.

b. Revised Resolution Establishing a Resolution Numbering System

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer and seconded by Alderman Blackman to adopt a revised Resolution (**RES 2025-001**) Establishing a Resolution Numbering System, removing the "sponsorship" verbiage. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

Aye: Alderman Tillis, Alderman Stennis, Alderman Wade, Alderman Pfeiffer, Alderman Blackman, Alderman Messenger, Alderman Hinton
Nay: None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Alderman Hinton, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to go into a closed session to determine the necessity of entering into an executive session.

The City Clerk returned to the meeting and announced that a motion was made by Alderman Stennis, seconded by Alderman Hinton, and unanimously carried to remain in executive session to discuss a litigation update on the existing cases of Fisher, Garriga, Saucier, Dedeaux, Clerk, and Nguyen; a new case involving Gregory Dixon II; the announcement of franchise agreements in the newly annexed area and negotiation of contracts with AT&T, Sparklight/Cable One, C Spire, CenterPoint/Delta Utilities, and Singing River Electric; the Michael Butler lawsuit; an update on Rosenberg vs. Ocean Springs; and an update on the Securix case.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Hinton, and unanimously carried to come out of executive session, where no action was taken.

Ronald McDonald addressed the Mayor and Board again regarding the closing time restriction that had been placed during the Labor Day weekend and thanked the Board for lifting the ban.

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RECESS UNTIL 6:00 P.M. on SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Hinton, and unanimously carried to recess.

The meeting ended at 8:48 p.m.



Mayor Cox



City Clerk Christine Millard

