

Good Evening and Happy Wednesday Memphis!



Let me be clear: Memphis needs more Fred L. Davises.

Wise, tenacious, and a spirited advocate for the socioeconomic improvement of the lives of the underserved, Former Councilman Davis was a man of firsts, fueled by a life informed by obstacles overcome. Born 86 years ago, at the height of the Great Depression, Councilman Davis grew up within a segregated Memphis, both on our city's south and north sides. Raised in a family of limited means, Councilman Davis found nourishment through his mother's practical lessons and his father's entrepreneurial spirit, traits that guided him throughout adulthood.

A 1953 graduate of Manassas High School, Councilman Davis matriculated at Tennessee State University where he received an accounting degree before serving in the United States Army for two years in France. Upon his honorable discharge, he returned to Memphis, making Orange Mound his home.

Like most trailblazers, dissatisfied with the status quo, Councilman Davis quickly set out to redefine life's possibilities, not only for himself, but for others.

In doing so, his efforts resulted in the **integration** of Memphis' Fairgrounds in the early 1960s. Still seeing possibilities for social change, Councilman Davis then became the **first** African American owner of an independent insurance company within the Greater Mid-South. Continuing to reach onward and upward, he also answered the call during the Civil Rights Movement, becoming one of the **first** African American members of the Memphis City Council in 1968. He held his Council position for twelve years, most notably marked by his tenure as the **first** African American Chairman of our city's legislative body in 1972.

However, Councilman Davis was much more than his countless achievements. After his passing on May 12, 2020, his legacy will be defined by his unflinching commitment to a **vision for a better tomorrow**, one driven by equal opportunity and equitable outcomes for those historically disenfranchised.

When reflecting upon his life's journey, Councilman Davis noted that it had "been a good ride," but a "hard ride," his ability to persist rooted in the belief that "where there is a will, there is a way." In this instance, the honesty of his words proved to be rivaled only by their historical significance.

Indeed, but for the efforts of men like Councilman Davis, Memphis would look quite different. His willingness to reimagine an improved world, and determination to see those changes brought to fruition, continue to resonate today.

Join me in honoring the life and contributions of the late Councilman Fred L. Davis. Let his actions inspire our present and future endeavors.

Yesterday, the Memphis City Council convened remotely to discuss ways to move Memphis forward. The meeting was broadcast via live-stream, as well via 88.5 FM (WQOX). If you did not listen to Tuesday's Council's meeting, a full review can be found, [here](#).

Improving COVID-19 Contact Tracing Efforts:

The Council values the health and safety of Memphis citizens. Period. As we enter [phase two of the re-opening of our local economy](#), key public health response-and-prevention efforts must be bolstered, namely contact tracing. With that in mind, on Tuesday, the Council passed a resolution allocating \$2,770,000 of the City of Memphis' \$113,647,218 CARES Act funding to the Shelby County Health Department to increase their capacity to hire, train, and deploy additional staff to conduct contact tracing within our community. Of note, the Council's measure represents an opportunity to

collaborate with Shelby County Government, which also contributed funds to the effort. In all, the action will improve our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic by quickly identifying those exposed to individuals who have tested positive for the virus, and risk transmitting it to others.

Requesting the Governor to Authorize Voting by Demand to Prevent Further Spread of COVID-19 during the 2020 Election Cycle:

The Council also has an eye toward your safety during this year's election cycle. As such, yesterday, the Council approved a resolution requesting Tennessee Governor Bill Lee to issue an Executive Order suspending certain provisions of Tennessee Code Annotated (§) 2-6-201 to the extent necessary to authorize absentee voting by demand as is necessary to respond to and prevent the spread of COVID-19 during the 2020 Election Cycle. In doing so, the Council strives to respond to the concerns of citizens in a relevant manner as we work to adjust our social practices to meet current health challenges.

Impasse Considerations and Decisions:

City government-based employees who belong to unions may negotiate with the City of Memphis on the topic of wages, and related employment agreements. When those negotiations reach an impasse, the Council works to consider the offers of both parties involved, ultimately rendering a final decision in favor of one party's position, or the other. On Tuesday, the Council considered the positions of six unions, as well as the City of Memphis' corresponding stance. In this instance, though the Council values the services provided by the members of each individual union, the decision was made to support the positions of the City of Memphis in each impasse. As we work to approve a FY21 budget that preserves core city services, it is vital that we adhere to a conservative fiscal approach in light of the ongoing economic uncertainty in the Nation, State, and City.

Maintaining our valued Public Works Infrastructure:

The Council remains committed to maintaining our local public works infrastructure for the benefit of all citizens. To that end, yesterday, the Council approved the appropriation of construction funds in the amount of \$2,000,000 to perform various drainage repairs citywide. The upkeep of our extensive public works framework is vital and will continue as required.

Remember the 2020 Census Community Challenge:

Question One: Have you submitted your response for the 2020 Census?

Question Two: Did you know that it's **not too late** to be counted?

As of May 11, only 55% of citizens living within Shelby County have completed and submitted a response. However, *the numbers count*. Specifically, the 2020 Census data will be used to determine how federal funds, grants, support to states, counties, and communities will be allocated to cities like Memphis for use in *improving* our schools, hospitals, roads, public works, and a myriad of other vital programs including fire and police services. Furthermore, the numbers will inform the decennial apportionment of voting memberships, or seats, in the U.S. House of Representatives. Therefore, it is critical that you participate, now.

To that point, Mayor Strickland issued a "**2020 Census Community Challenge.**"

How does it work? Based on current Census data, neighborhood organizations, CDCs, nonprofits, and community organizations are invited to participate and register. Each organization will then be given the current response rate for its neighborhood census tract. The neighborhoods with the highest improved response rate from the time of entry will win prizes, to include: 1st place – a security camera placed in a designated area within your community, 2nd place – a community marker to designate your neighborhood, or 3rd place – a community beautification project within your neighborhood.

To qualify, your neighborhood census tract must currently have a self-response rate of 60% or less. Register for the 2020 Census Community Challenge at the link below:

census.memphistn.gov/communitychallenge.

Mid-South COVID-19 Regional Response Fund:

Mayor Strickland has advocated for increased support of the Mid-South COVID-19 Regional Response Fund. I echo his sentiment. This fund, hosted by the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, supports those within our city and region affected by the ongoing public health crisis. Donations to the fund provide immediate monetary support to local relief, recovery, and resiliency efforts. As of May 15, 2020, the Fund has deployed approximately \$1,916,000 to organizations dedicated to assisting our neighbors in need.

Please consider donating, today, by visiting cfgm.org/COVID.

Seeking Assistance During COVID-19:

Last week, as with each week during the COVID-19 crisis, I encouraged you all to understand that it is normal for adults, children, and families, alike, to experience feelings of fear and anxiety about the virus. Nonetheless, I am steadfast in my belief that **we will overcome this difficult time together**. Therefore, as we work toward resolving our current challenges, please seek appropriate medical and mental support if you are experiencing fear and anxiety that is negatively affecting your daily life, or that of your loved ones.

If you require assistance, but do not know where to go when seeking professional care, call **2-1-1**, or visit the link below:

<http://tn211.mycommunitypt.com/>.

2-1-1 is Tennessee's community services help line. When you call **2-1-1**, you'll get a real person, one who is trained to help you sort out your needs, and then give you phone numbers and addresses of the closest places where you can get help within the Greater Memphis Area. Please take care of yourself. Always remember, there is no shame in seeking help!

Looking Forward:

As we move ahead, I am and will always be honored to serve you each day as part of a thirteen-councilmember team working to transform our great city into a place of opportunity for all. Stay tuned for future Council updates as we keep you informed regarding the activities taking place here at City Hall!

With earnest appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrice J. Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "P".

Patrice Jordan Robinson
Chairwoman, Memphis City Council
District 3