

Good Afternoon and Happy Juneteenth Memphis!



Did you know African Americans within the State of Tennessee remained enslaved, by law, one year, ten months, and twenty-four days **after** President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863?

How about the fact that 2 ½ years later, the institution of slavery continued to persist throughout the frontier areas of our Nation, in particular the State of Texas, leaving many African Americans in-bondage, months **after** the conclusion of the Civil War on April 9, 1865?

Were you aware that on **June 19, 1865**, Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, arrived in Galveston, Texas, with welcomed news that the Civil War had ended, and that the enslaved were free, thereby marking the significance of the day we now call "**Juneteenth**"?

The importance of these events should not be overlooked as it relates to the liberation of African Americans in the United States of America. By recognizing Juneteenth, we support new opportunities to learn from the past for the purpose of ensuring an improved future. By celebrating this historic day, we secure the observance of the end of slavery as part of the history and heritage of our Nation.

Join me in honoring African American freedom today, Juneteenth 2020!

This week, the Memphis City Council met twice to discuss measures focused on moving Memphis forward. If you were not able to view either meeting, a full review is provided, [here](#).

Establishing Juneteenth as an Official Holiday within the City of Memphis:

For years, the Council has passed resolutions designating various days of acknowledgement. However, as we dedicate ourselves to championing reform in a concrete manner, it is necessary to bring greater inclusion to our local holidays. In doing so, on Tuesday, the Council unanimously approved a resolution requesting Mayor Strickland to proclaim June 19 as “**Juneteenth Independence Day**” within the City of Memphis. That request was granted! As such, the occasion will now be officially recognized each year, *starting today*.

Final Approval of Public Safety Reform Resolutions:

On June 9, the Council met during Executive Session to discuss resolutions related to improving public safety transparency, use-of-force-policy, and citizen involvement in the selection of leaders appointed to protect and serve. Specifically, the resolutions seek to achieve the following outcomes:

- (1) Expand the City of Memphis public safety data portal to include all complaints of excessive force and misuse of body-worn cameras,
- (2) Adopt the “8-Can’t Wait” principles designed by the anti-police brutality group Campaign Zero to reduce and prevent violent encounters between law enforcement and members of the public, and
- (3) Request Mayor Strickland to form a diverse, community task force to assist in the selection of a new Memphis Police Department Director.

On Tuesday, each resolution received final approval by the Council. Taken together, the actions represent a pivotal step toward the improvement of public safety policy within our community.

Investing in Community Anchors within the City of Memphis:

The Council believes in the ability of community anchors to generate job creation and economic development, locally. Consequently, on Tuesday, the Council passed a resolution allocating \$250,000 to Southbrook Properties for

the development of Southbrook Town Centre. Ultimately, the project has the potential to contribute \$6.50 in industry output for every dollar of public investment, create 79.4 jobs for every \$1M in public investment, create \$228 in labor income for every \$100 of public investment, while contributing \$2,006,491 annually in local and state tax revenue. The resolution requests the administration to analyze and determine any unused funds from FY20 that can be utilized for the \$250,000 allocation to Southbrook Properties as a FY20 expenditure.

Maintaining Memphis Libraries, Community Centers, Parks, and Museums:

The Council believes libraries, community centers, parks, and museums are invaluable resources for the enrichment of our citizens' lives. However, to provide a benefit to Memphians in the long-term, these indoor and outdoor spaces must be maintained. With that in mind, on Tuesday, the Council approved the appropriation of \$1,083,000 for roof replacement at the Gaisman Community Center, and the Cherokee, North, and Levi branch libraries. Additionally, \$60,000 was appropriated to replace plumbing at the Pink Palace Museum. Furthermore, \$1,418,184 was appropriated to conduct HVAC/Boiler replacement or upgrades at the Hickory Hill Community Center and Pink Palace Museum, as well as to the Cordova and Randolph branch libraries. Finally, a total of \$19,901,053 was appropriated for construction and coverline expenses to be used in ongoing efforts to maintain and improve our City's park system across all single and super districts!

Maintaining Memphis Bridges and Streets:

The Council also remains committed to maintaining our local public works infrastructure for the benefit of all citizens. To that end, on Tuesday, the Council approved the appropriation of \$1,845,813 in construction funds to repair the Watkins Street and McLean Street Bridges over the Wolf River. Additionally, \$500,000 was appropriated to conduct LED traffic signal replacements, \$1,700,000 was appropriated to address speed hump installation efforts, and \$6,500,000 was appropriated to ensure paving operations on City of Memphis streets. The upkeep of our extensive public works framework is vital and will continue as required.

Improving our Approach to Health and Safety during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Memphis City Councilman Dr. Jeff Warren, and Dr. Manoj Jain, an infectious disease specialist, are members of the Shelby County COVID-19 Joint Task Force. Since the pandemic's first documented impact upon our community in March 2020, Dr. Warren and Dr. Jain have worked to provide Mayor Strickland, as well as the Memphis City Council, with up-to-date numbers regarding the local spread of COVID-19. Over the last three months, the following is clear: Memphians have answered the call, in large part, adapting to social changes necessary to responsibly address the lingering existence of the virus.

However, our COVID-19 numbers have continued to rise since Memorial Day. In fact, at present, the rate of new infections has increased along with related-hospitalizations.

Furthermore, without a method of pinpointing where the disease is being transmitted, it is increasingly difficult to reduce our daily number of new cases. As of yesterday, 69% of confirmed COVID-19 cases within Memphis/Shelby County occurred as a result of **untraced community spread** of the virus. This finding must be addressed, now, through an affirmed commitment to specific health and safety practices.

With that in mind, this week, the Council made the decision to establish a Face Covering/Mask Ordinance. The new law, which will go into effect upon being signed by Mayor Strickland, was established to (1) reduce the spread of COVID-19, and (2) mitigate the impact of the virus on members of the public, and on the delivery of critical healthcare services to those in need.

Generally, members of the public are required to wear a face covering outside their home when visiting local businesses. Specific requirements and exemptions can be found, [here](#).

As we move forward, the Council seeks your cooperation as we work together for the purpose of keeping all Memphians safe.

Remember: wash your hands, maintain six-foot social distance, and *wear a mask*.

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, flowing style with a large initial "P" and "R".

Patrice Jordan Robinson
Chairwoman, Memphis City Council
District 3