

**CITY OF OCEAN SPRINGS - MAYOR & BOARD OF ALDERMEN
RECESS MEETING OF MARCH 17, 2026 - MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

Be it remembered that the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Ocean Springs met in a Recess Meeting at City Hall at 6:00 p.m. on March 17, 2026. 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, Payroll Administrator Jennifer Ferrell, Police Chief Steven Dye, Fire Deputy Chief Sam Guin, 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, Mary C. O'Keefe Center Director Sarah Qarqish, 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 Hinton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Mayor announced Item 4-c, a Resolution adjusting the Ocean Springs School District Board appointment schedule, was pulled from the agenda. A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer, seconded by Alderman Stennis, and unanimously carried to accept the agenda as amended.

AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Eric Graham, item 4-b, spoke regarding responsible growth and the need for developers to fund impact studies. He stated that he is being taxed in the newly annexed area for water and sewer services that are not yet available and questioned the recusal of Ward 6 Alderman Messenger, expressing concern that it limits Ward 6 representation.

Albert Diaz, item 4-b, expressed concern regarding Ward 6 representation due to Alderman Messenger's inability to vote. He questioned whether adequate funding and infrastructure are in place to support new development in Ward 6 and referenced potential legal action related to impact studies, wetlands, and infrastructure concerns.

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James Lewis, item 4-b, spoke in favor of a development moratorium and requested studies related to traffic, flooding, infrastructure, and the need for additional police and fire personnel.

Brian Rose, item 4-b, spoke regarding development in wetlands in Ward 6 and expressed the opinion that Alderman Messenger should not be required to refrain from voting and encouraged her to vote on the matter.

Brian Harvey, item 4-b, spoke against moratoriums in general and stated that development decisions should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Appoint Civil Service Commissioner

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer, seconded by Alderman Hinton, and unanimously carried to appoint Tristan Armer to the Civil Service Commission to fill an unexpired term, with the term expiring July 31, 2026, consistent with Mississippi Code § 21-31-5.

b. Discussion: Draft Resolution establishing a temporary moratorium on certain residential development applications

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer and seconded by Alderman Tillis, to approve the draft resolution establishing a temporary nine-month moratorium on certain high-impact residential development applications in order to allow completion of infrastructure, planning, and regulatory updates necessary to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

Alderman Messenger stated that she had been advised by the City Attorney and her personal attorney to recuse herself due to pending litigation involving her family related to a property boundary dispute associated with a subdivision. She stated that she was advised not to participate due to potential ethical concerns and further stated that, based on guidance from the Ethics Commission, another member of the Board should also consider recusal. Alderman Messenger recused herself and left the Boardroom at 6:20 p.m. and did not participate in further discussion or vote.

During discussion, Alderman Hinton requested amendments to Section 3 of the draft resolution. The City Attorney suggested revising Section 3 to read, "This moratorium shall not apply to the following developments," removing the language "for which submission of applications has been received by the City prior to the effective date of this resolution." Alderman Pfeiffer also noted a clerical correction in Section 5. Alderman Pfeiffer amended her motion to include removal of the referenced language in Section 3 and correction of the clerical error.

Alderman Hinton stated that a moratorium should be supported by objective data

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demonstrating a clear public need, such as impact studies, and expressed concern regarding potential legal challenges. Alderman Pfeiffer stated that the moratorium would allow time to complete necessary planning tasks and noted that the Unified Development Code Review Committee is currently underway. The Mayor stated that existing infrastructure studies have been conducted and addressed in recent years and cautioned against implementing a citywide moratorium. Alderman Tillis clarified that the intent was not a complete shutdown of development, but a temporary pause on developments of three or more dwelling units, particularly in areas with wetlands concerns.

Alderman Blackman stated that he would like the City Attorney to draft a letter regarding potential unincorporating of certain areas of Ward 6 to be determined.

A vote was taken on Alderman Pfeiffer's motion to approve the draft resolution as amended. The vote was as follows:

Aye: Alderman Tillis, Alderman Stennis, Alderman Pfeiffer

Nay: Alderman Wade, Alderman Blackman, Alderman Hinton

There being a tie vote, the Mayor voted Nay, and the motion failed.

Alderman Messenger returned to the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

- c. Resolution adjusting the appointment schedules of appointed members of the Ocean Springs School District Board of Trustees

The item was pulled from the agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Alderman Stennis, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda.

Mayor/BOA:

- a. Adopt Revised Resolution 2026-009 to request surplus equipment from the Jackson County Board of Supervisors - 1998 Mack Tractor Truck
- b. Authorize and waive all associated fees for the Ocean Springs High School boys soccer club to host a banquet at the Civic Center on Monday, March 23, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.; to advertise the resources of the city
- c. Authorize and waive all associated fees for Switzer/Tiblier/Peltier classes to go to Stephen Parker ball fields and Ryan Youth Center on a walking field trip on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.; to advertise the resources of the city
- d. Approve the Special Event Permit Application for Flower Fest 2026 on April 11, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at Traveler Cafe and Art Lawn, road closures on Washington Ave. and Joseph St., at no cost to the City, the applicant pays the

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associated event cost

- e. Authorize the Ocean Springs Education Foundation – Crawfish & Cornhole for Classrooms event the use, without charge, of 90 barricades, 15 trash cans, and two generator-powered light banks for April 17, 2026 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Mary C. O'Keefe Cultural Center as a City sponsorship to promote and advertise the resources of the City of Ocean Springs
- f. Authorize and waive all associated costs for the Ocean Springs Junior Citizens Club to host a new member induction ceremony on Wednesday, April 29, 2026, from 4:30 p.m.- 6:00 p.m., on the stage at Fort Maurepas; to advertise the resources of the city
- g. Authorize and waive all associated fees for the Ocean Springs High School Tennis Team to host their end-of-the-year banquet at the Civic Center on Thursday, April 30, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. -10:00 p.m.; to advertise the resources of the city
- h. Approve the Special Event Permit Application for Taylor Family Reunion on June 13, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., at Front Beach Ocean Springs, at no cost to the City the applicant pays the associated event cost
- i. Authorize \$1,000.00 payment from Ward 5 funds to support a beautification project in the Spanish Cove Subdivision common area
- j. Authorize \$1,000.00 payment from Ward 5 funds to the Bienville Place Owners Association for neighborhood entrance sign and landscaping enhancements

Mary C. O'Keefe Cultural Center:

- k. Authorize acceptance of a \$1,007.00 donation from the Mississippi Songwriters Association for Media Room technology equipment and allocate the donation to the appropriate budget line items
- l. Authorize the Mayor and Mary C. Director to execute the Memorandums of Understanding for programming partnerships at the Mary C. O'Keefe Cultural Arts Center with Wanda Norton, Haven Hale, Meranda Hudson & Morgan Ollinger, Arielle Victoria, and Old Time Sailors

City Clerk:

- m. Approve Minutes: Recess Meeting February 18, 2026
- n. Approve Minutes: Regular Meeting March 6, 2026
- o. Adopt a Resolution requesting the annual \$260,000 payment from Jackson County for recreational services pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement

Police Department:

- p. Accept OSPD Monthly Report for February 2026

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Fire Department:

- q. Accept OSFD Monthly Report for February 2026

Human Resources/Risk Management:

- r. Authorize promotion of Police Sergeant Daniel Wanhala to Lieutenant, effective March 28, 2026; \$27.48 hourly rate; six months probationary status
- s. Accept resignation of Patrolman Matthew Geis, effective March 10, 2026; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position
- t. Authorize removal of Police Sergeant James Parker from probationary status to full time status effective April 7, 2026
- u. Authorize removal of Patrolman Nicholas Hayes from probationary status to full time status effective immediately
- v. Authorize employment of Susan Powell, Part-time Dispatcher, effective March 18, 2026; \$18.00 hourly rate; pending successful completion of all pre-employment requirements
- w. Accept resignation of Firefighter Seth Tillman, effective March 11, 2026; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position
- x. Authorize employment of Jordan Turner, Firefighter, effective March 23, 2026; \$13.64 hourly rate; one year probationary status, pending successful completion of all pre-employment requirements.
- y. Authorize extension of probationary period for Parks Employee #2803 for six months
- z. Authorize removal of Beautification Laborer Andrew Harris from probationary status to full time status effective immediately
- aa. Authorize removal of Street Laborer Brittany Gorsline from probationary status to full time status effective immediately
- bb. Authorize extension of probationary period for Public Works Employee #2845 for six months
- cc. Accept termination of Public Works Employee #2148, effective March 5, 2026; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position
- dd. Accept resignation of Truck Driver Raymond Smith, effective March 14, 2026; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position
- ee. Accept termination of Public Works Employee #2874, effective March 9, 2026; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position
- ff. Authorize employment of Charles White, Truck Driver, effective March 18, 2026; \$18.41 hourly rate; one year probationary status, pending successful completion of all pre-employment requirements

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gg. Authorize employment of Shawn Johnson, Street Laborer, effective March 18, 2026; \$15.00 hourly rate; one year probationary status, pending successful completion of all pre-employment requirements

hh. Authorize position grade and step adjustments for certain City employees/positions effective March 28, 2026, as recommended by the Human Resources Director and Finance Director and outlined in the attached memorandum

Planning Commission (PC):

ii. Accept PC Minutes for February 10, 2026 Meeting

Zoning Adjustment Board (ZAB):

jj. Accept ZAB Minutes for February 10, 2026 Meeting

kk. Approve a variance for a side yard setback from 10' to 7' 6" on the north side of the property to construct an addition onto the existing house at 512 Dewey Ave - PIDN: 60137336.000; ZAB recommends approval

ll. Deny a variance for a rear yard setback from 25' to 10' to construct a 500 square foot addition to the existing house at 279 Holcomb Blvd — PIDN: 61135041.050; ZAB recommends denial

Historic Preservation Commission (HPC):

mm. Accept HPC Minutes for February 12, 2026 Meeting

nn. Approve a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to remove and replace the existing limestone driveway with a combination of concrete and brick pavers, and remove and replace the existing concrete walkways with brick pavers at 525 Jackson Ave - PIDN: 60137098.000; HPC recommends approval

oo. Approve a request for a COA to construct a 6' x 53' elevated platform along the southwest side of the residence, connecting the existing front and rear porches, install a 4' black fence along the southwest side property line and bulkhead, and extend the existing garage toward the rear of the property by 16' located at 1217 Sunset Ave - PIDN: 60119030.110; HPC recommends approval

pp. Approve a request for a COA to construct a 12' x 35' gravel driveway connecting to the existing walkway and to paint the exterior brick house with an off-white masonry limewash at 1211 Bowen Ave - PIDN: 60137096.000; HPC recommends approval

Building Department:

qq. Accept the Building Department Permit Report for February 2026

rr. Approve the Building Official's recommendations for the tree applications received through March 11, 2026

ss. Accept Code Enforcement Report through March 11, 2026

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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 Hinton, seconded by Alderman Wade, and 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: Authorize the adjustment of water/sewer accounts due to a finding that the customers did not receive the benefit of the utility and the excess usage was due to unforeseen circumstances

A motion was made by Alderman Stennis, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to adjust the water/sewer accounts listed, with the finding that the customers did not receive the benefit of the utility and excess usage was due to unforeseen circumstances.

- c. City Clerk: Budget Amendment – Second Quarter FY 2026

The City Clerk/Finance Director explained the proposed budget amendments. A motion was made by Alderman Wade, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to authorize the approval of the Second Quarter FY 2026 Budget Amendments as presented.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Cynthia Sutton, Ocean Springs Chamber–Main Street, invited the public to attend the Spring Arts Festival on March 28 and 29 in downtown Ocean Springs, noting there will be over 200 arts, crafts, and food vendors. She stated that she has been working with Public Works and the Mayor to install banners downtown and along Highway 90. She also noted that American Cruise Lines continues to bring excursions to Ocean Springs on Mondays in March and has added November and December dates due to increased demand.

Bill Moore thanked Alderman Messenger for her consideration of ethical obligations in her decision to recuse herself and for following legal guidance.

James Lewis spoke regarding national security concerns and encouraged the public to remain vigilant and attentive to current events.

Ron Chambers spoke about his service on the Ocean Springs School District Board of Trustees and stated that maintaining a staggered term rotation, with only one member

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rotating off each year, is important for continuity and experience.

Dee Wichman questioned the use of Ward funds for subdivisions with homeowners associations, noting that residents already pay dues. The Mayor responded that such funding assists with maintenance of City rights-of-way within those subdivisions.

Brian Rose clarified that his earlier comments were not directed at Alderman Messenger's decision and expressed concern regarding the circumstances involving her family. He also questioned why the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) grant for the parking garage was not included on the agenda and discussed the timeline of the grant application, documentation, and funding.

MAYOR AND ALDERMEN'S FORUM

Alderman Tillis discussed the need for additional restroom facilities during events and suggested that coastal cities consider sharing comfort stations.

Alderman Stennis thanked Public Works for their quick cleanup following the St. Patrick's Day Parade and requested a work session to discuss parking garage issues in order to move toward a decision. Alderman Pfeiffer concurred with the need for a work session.

Alderman Wade thanked neighboring police departments for their assistance during the St. Patrick's Day Parade, as well as the City's Police Department and Public Works staff.

Alderman Pfeiffer asked about the status of the MOU for use of the boat launch at the USM Research facility. The Mayor responded that it is being drafted and will be presented soon. She also stated that she had previously requested a list of funding requests and had not yet received it. The Mayor responded that a list from the City's lobbyist had been provided; however, Alderman Pfeiffer clarified that this was not the information she requested and asked that the Project Manager or Grants Administrator compile the requested list. She also asked about the status of the Covington Engineering project. The Mayor stated that the City is awaiting updated information from MDEQ and will provide results once received. Alderman Pfeiffer further requested that the Project Manager provide contact information for a local CSX representative.

Alderman Blackman made a motion to have the City Attorney draft a resolution to unincorporate certain areas of Ward 6. Alderman Pfeiffer seconded for discussion. Alderman Messenger asked about the intent of the motion. Alderman Blackman stated that there are ongoing concerns from residents who do not wish to be within the City limits and that these issues warrant further consideration. Alderman Messenger stated that she would need to meet with constituents to represent their interests and expressed concern regarding the impact of such action. Following discussion, Alderman Blackman withdrew his motion, stating his intent to work with Alderman Messenger and revisit the matter at a later date.

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Alderman Messenger asked the Public Works Director about trash collection in certain areas of the City, specifically Ocean Springs Road and Highway 57. The Public Works Director responded that 27 bags were collected in the previous week and that additional cleanup is ongoing.

A motion was made by Alderman Hinton, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to allow the Thornton family to reserve the Fort Maurepas pavilion on March 22, 2026, for a celebration of life at no cost to the City. Alderman Hinton thanked City staff and requested to meet with the Planning Department to review a citywide planning analysis.

The Mayor thanked all involved in the success of the first St. Patrick's Day Parade.

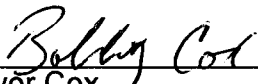
EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

ADJOURN UNTIL 6:00 P.M. on APRIL 7, 2026

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to adjourn.

The meeting ended at 7:07 p.m.



Mayor Cox



City Clerk Christine Millard

