

**CITY OF OCEAN SPRINGS – MAYOR & BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 3, 2026 – 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 March 3, 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, Deputy City Clerk Vicky Hupe, 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 Blackman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

**PROCLAMATION/PRESENTATION**

**a. Proclamation: Irish Heritage Month - March 2026**

Miss Colleen 2026, Amy Bowman, accepted the proclamation from the Mayor proclaiming March 2026 as Irish Heritage Month.

**b. Presentation: Glenn E. Miller - Lovelace Oak**

Glenn Miller spoke on behalf of his Facebook group, Ocean Springs Voice for the Trees. He presented current photos of the Lovelace Oak and an AI-generated image depicting the area if the tree were removed. He requested that the Board of Aldermen consider alternatives to removal, including support systems for the remaining tree. Mr. Miller discussed potential options such as bracing, cabling, and banding, stating that he has been in contact with metal workers about constructing bands for the tree to avoid damage to the over 200-year-old oak. He stated that with proper feeding and maintenance, the void in the trunk could potentially fill in over time. He said the group is advocating for an engineered solution to preserve the iconic downtown tree and requested that the Board of Aldermen rescind the motion to remove the tree.

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**AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bill Moore, agenda item 7-j, spoke on behalf of the Ocean Springs Chamber of Commerce–Main Street and thanked the Board of Aldermen for the resolution requesting an Amtrak stop in Ocean Springs during Cruisin’ the Coast and the Peter Anderson Festival.

Libby Miller, agenda item 5-a, spoke in favor of the adoption of the ordinance to allow construction in the floodway with a FEMA no-rise certificate.

Chelsea Prince, agenda item 3-a, read a letter from Larry Tucci in support of saving the Lovelace Oak tree. She then spoke on her own behalf in support of preserving the tree through structural support and maintenance rather than removal and requested that the Board of Aldermen rescind the motion to remove the tree.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Adopt Ordinance: An Amendment to Ord 2020-06 Appendix A – Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance of the Unified Development Code of the City of Ocean Springs, Mississippi; To Amend and Clarify Variance and Appeal Procedures In Article 6, Including the Recommendation Role of the Zoning & Adjustment Board and Final Decision Authority of the Board of Aldermen

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer and seconded by Alderman Messenger to adopt **Ordinance 2026-01** - An Amendment to Ord 2020-06 Appendix A – Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance of the Unified Development Code of the City of Ocean Springs, Mississippi; To Amend and Clarify Variance and Appeal Procedures In Article 6, Including the Recommendation Role of the Zoning & Adjustment Board and Final Decision Authority of the Board of Aldermen. The motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

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

**NEW BUSINESS**

- a. **AMENDED:** Ocean Springs Paving List 2026

A motion was made by Alderman Hinton, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to approve the Ocean Springs 2026 Paving List.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

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

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**Mayor/BOA:**

- a. Authorize and waive all associated fees for the Ocean Springs Garden Club to utilize the Civic Center on Sunday, March 8, 2026, to host a fundraiser from 2:00-4:00 p.m.; to advertise the resources of the city
- b. Approve the Special Event Application and waive all associated fees for the Ocean Springs Upper Elementary on March 10, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., at Freedom Field for a Kickball Field Trip and Picnic group 1; to advertise the resources of the city
- c. Approve the Special Event Permit Application and waive all associated fees for the Ocean Springs Upper Elementary on March 11, 2026, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at Freedom Field for a Kickball Field Trip and Picnic group 2; to advertise the resources of the city
- d. Authorize the Mayor to execute the Right of Use (ROU) Agreement with Hancock Whitney Bank, as permitted under Mississippi law, for use of the employee parking lot located at 901 Washington Avenue for the 2026 Spring Arts Festival from 4:00 p.m. on March 27, 2026, through 7:00 p.m. on March 29, 2026
- e. Approve the Special Event Permit Application for Earth Day on April 18, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., at the Mary C. O’Keefe Cultural Center, City event may incur overtime costs
- f. Approve the Special Event Permit Application and waive all associated fees for the Ocean Springs Upper Elementary Field Trip (Rice, Landrum and Hovatter) on May 14, 2026, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at Little Children's Park, to advertise the resources of the city
- g. Approve the Special Event Permit Application for the Witches Ride of Ocean Springs on October 24, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., (to accommodate setup and tear down) with October 26, 2026 as a rain date; the parade will start/end at Freedom Field - Parade N on Pershing - W. on Government - E. on Porter and back to Freedom Field; Street closures will be needed per OSPD and waive the fees for barricades; the applicant pays all other associated event costs
- h. Adopt a Resolution requesting surplus equipment from the Jackson County Board of Supervisors for a 1998 Mack Tractor Truck and authorize the Mayor to submit a formal request letter - **RES 2026-009**
- i. Adopt a Resolution requesting assistance from the Jackson County Board of Supervisors for use of a Road Grading Machine and authorize the Mayor to submit a formal request letter - **RES 2026-010**
- j. **AMENDED:** Adopt a Resolution requesting a temporary Amtrak stop in Ocean Springs during Cruisin' the Coast and the Peter Anderson Festival 2026 - **RES 2026-011**

**City Clerk:**

- k. Accept February 2026 Aged Receivables Report

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**Human Resources/Risk Management:**

- l.** Authorize removing Firefighter James King from probationary status to full-time status, effective March 3, 2026
- m.** Authorize employment of Brian Sloat, Fire Marshal, effective March 30, 2026; \$27.24 hourly rate; one-year probationary status, pending successful completion of all pre-employment requirements
- n. AMENDED:** Authorize employment of Oyoko Armstrong, Custodian, effective March 4, 2026; \$14.00 hourly rate; one-year probationary status, pending successful completion of all pre-employment requirements

**Planning Commission (PC):**

- o.** Approve a request for a Residential Short-Term Rental Permit at 130 Booth Circle - PIDN: 61133170.000; PC recommends approval
- p.** Approve a request for a Residential Short-Term Rental Permit at 602 Dogwood Road - PIDN: 61037202.000; PC recommends approval
- q.** Approve a request for a Residential Short-Term Rental Permit at 609 Russell Ave - PIDN: 61190022.000; PC recommends approval

**Building Department:**

- r.** Approve the Building Official's recommendations for the tree applications received through February 25, 2026
- s.** Accept Code Enforcement Report through February 26, 2026

**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

Alderman Blackman recused himself and left the Boardroom at 6:28 p.m.

A motion was made by Alderman Hinton, seconded by Alderman Stennis, and unanimously carried to approve the Docket of Claims, finding that all expenditures are appropriate and authorized by law and ordering that the summary be spread upon the minutes.

- b.** City Clerk: Accept the Monthly Budget Report

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

Alderman Blackman returned to the Boardroom at 6:29 p.m.

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- c. Finance: Authorize \$10,332.78 purchase of police radios and corresponding budget amendment to allocate funds

A motion was made by Alderman Stennis, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to amend the budget to allocate \$10,332.78 to Police Equipment for the purchase of radios, funded by the \$10,234.25 Motorola Solutions refund and \$98.53 from the General Fund.

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chris Johnson, Ward 6, stated that he attended the town hall forum held last Friday with Alderman Messenger and expressed his support for a six-month moratorium on development in Ward 6. He stated that he recently learned of two proposed subdivisions with over 200 homes each and expressed concern regarding potential wetlands and flooding impacts on neighboring properties.

Albert Diaz asked whether the proposed subdivisions had been independently surveyed regarding wetlands delineation.

Eamon Mohiuddin requested that the Board of Aldermen be good stewards of the City of Ocean Springs and protect wetlands and trees.

**MAYOR AND ALDERMEN'S FORUM**

Alderman Messenger asked the Building Official about the subdivisions referenced during public comment by Chris Johnson. She stated that the area appears to contain wetlands and that an excavator had been observed on the property and a barbed wire fence had been moved to the property line. She asked whether permits were in place and whether county or city fencing guidelines were being enforced. The Building Official responded that he would recheck the area. He stated that the last time he visited the site there was no excavator present and that the barbed wire fence is allowable in Jackson County as a temporary fence.

Alderman Messenger also referenced another property containing wetlands located off Highway 90 with a proposed townhome development and daycare facility. She stated that the deadline for citizens to submit comments regarding permitting had passed and expressed concern regarding what she described as unchecked development, particularly within the newly annexed areas of Ward 6. She requested consideration of a six-month moratorium to halt and review new construction in Ward 6 or citywide. She clarified that developments already platted would not be affected and that the moratorium would apply only to new developments consisting of three or more homes.

Alderman Pfeiffer stated that she has also been considering a moratorium and suggested a nine-month citywide moratorium with progress reports during that time. She stated that infrastructure studies and the Unified Development Code (UDC) Review Committee could

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be utilized during the moratorium period. She stated that progress reports regarding infrastructure, school capacity, and public safety would provide accountability and a stronger basis for the moratorium. She requested that the City Attorney draft a moratorium resolution and set a public hearing for April 7.

Alderman Hinton discussed the importance of due process and requested that the City Attorney review two Jackson County platted subdivisions to ensure that a moratorium would not affect those developments. He stated that the process should include impact studies for new developments, including drainage, traffic, and schools.

Alderman Blackman stated that he could not support a citywide moratorium on new development, noting that issues could be addressed without implementing a moratorium.

Alderman Tillis asked about the proposed new developments in Ward 6 and clarified that the proposed moratorium would apply only to developments consisting of three or more residential units.

The Mayor stated that drainage issues within the annexed area are currently being reviewed. He explained that developers are responsible for engineering their projects and submitting them to the City for approval or denial. He stated that it would be too costly and time-consuming for the City to conduct engineering studies for the entire annexed area and noted that the City does not own the land. The Mayor stated that he does not support a moratorium. Alderman Messenger responded that conducting a stormwater runoff study in the annexed area would be responsible. The Mayor replied that the City does not own the land and cannot conduct such a study for the entire annexed area.

Alderman Pfeiffer stated that without additional assessments there could be increased flooding, strain on infrastructure, and additional traffic and safety concerns.

Alderman Hinton stated that any moratorium should be data-driven. He suggested that ordinances could be amended to better manage growth, including possible increases to lot size requirements and providing options for the City to deny developments that are not desired. He also stated that Jackson County Utility Authority (JCUA) has indicated the City currently has capacity for new developments and that developers should be responsible for addressing impacts related to their projects.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to hire Brandon Toothman as Sewer Laborer at an hourly rate of \$16.00, effective March 4, 2026, pending successful completion of all pre-employment requirements.

Alderman Pfeiffer readdressed the Lovelace Oak discussion and requested that the Board of Aldermen consider rescinding the motion to remove the tree in order to explore other options. The Mayor stated that all three experts consulted at the time of the original decision were asked to evaluate all options and that none recommended saving the tree.

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer and seconded by Alderman Stennis, to rescind

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the motion to remove the Lovelace Oak tree in order to explore other options. The motion failed with a vote as follows:

Aye: Alderman Stennis, Alderman Pfeiffer

Nay: Alderman Tillis, Alderman Wade, Alderman Blackman, Alderman Messenger, Alderman Hinton

Alderman Hinton stated that he is not in favor of rescinding the motion but would like other options reviewed prior to removal.

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer, seconded by Alderman Messenger, to authorize the City Attorney to draft a nine-month moratorium on new subdivisions consisting of three or more dwellings, multifamily developments, townhome developments, and rezonings intended for those uses, citywide, and to advertise a public hearing for April 7, 2026. The motion carried with a vote as follows:

Aye: Alderman Tillis, Alderman Stennis, Alderman Pfeiffer, Alderman Messenger

Nay: Alderman Wade, Alderman Blackman, Alderman Hinton

A motion was made by Alderman Wade, seconded by Alderman Stennis, and unanimously carried to approve the use of Freedom Field on March 12 from 8:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. for Ocean Springs Elementary kickball practice and to waive any associated fees.

Alderman Stennis stated that she would like to reduce the number of mismatched trash cans currently located on the beach and replace them with more attractive containers. She suggested replacing the blue plastic cans with white cans that could potentially be decorated by local art classes. She also raised concerns about the appearance of the portable toilets on the beach and asked that the City look into the possibility of constructing restroom facilities near the bridge and at the harbor. She further noted that the fencing on the Reynolds property at Jackson Avenue and Front Beach Drive needs updating.

The Mayor responded that the green garbage cans and portable toilets are owned by Jackson County and that the County pays for their servicing. He stated that prior to the placement of the portable toilets, individuals were using nearby private property. He asked whether the proposed restrooms would be permanent or movable and stated that if permanent, they would need to be constructed at an elevated height due to flood considerations. He suggested that comfort station-style restrooms may be a more feasible option.

Alderman Tillis stated that he liked the idea of white garbage cans decorated by artists or art students. He also asked about the possibility of metal trash cans, but the Public Works Director stated that metal cans typically last only about one year due to rust. Alderman Tillis added that restroom facilities are an important issue and that comfort station-style restrooms would be a good option to consider.

Alderman Hinton stated that tree protection and maintenance throughout the City is important. He noted that a GOMESA grant has been applied for to assist with hiring an

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arborist and requested an update on the status of the grant. He also stated that the tree committee needs to be finalized to assist with protecting the City's trees. He reminded everyone that the St. Patrick's Day Parade will be held on March 14 and thanked City staff for their hard work.

The Mayor stated that the St. Patrick's Day Parade is a new event for Ocean Springs and will be a great addition to the City's festivities. He also thanked everyone who participated in assisting the adopted community of Ashland, Mississippi, noting that over \$1,700 in gift cards and supplies were delivered. He further stated that the March of the Mayors canned fruit drive is currently underway and that approximately 800 additional cans of fruit are needed by Friday.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

The City Clerk returned to the meeting and announced that a motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to go into executive session for the purpose of litigation updates regarding *Higgins vs. Jackson County et al., Tembley, Dixon, Rosenberg, Holly Grove*, and the parking garage, the discussion of which would be detrimental to the litigating position of the City if held in open session.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to come out of executive session, where the following action was taken:

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to hire Michael Moore to represent the City in the Holly Grove appeal at the same rate as the City Attorney and to authorize the Mayor to sign the engagement letter.

**RECESS UNTIL 6:00 P.M. on MARCH 17, 2026**

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

The meeting ended at 8:05 p.m.

  
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Mayor Cox



  
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Clerk Christine Millard