

**CITY OF OCEAN SPRINGS - MAYOR & BOARD OF ALDERMEN
REGULAR MEETING OF JANUARY 6, 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 January 6, 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 Wade led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

CERTIFICATES

- a. Recognition of employment years of service: 10 years – Police Research Analyst Jesse Breland and Custodian Josette Kelley, 5 years – Firefighter Harris Paul Williams and Head Mechanic Bryan Farve

Police Research Analyst Jesse Breland and Firefighter Harris Paul Williams were present to accept their Years of Service Certificates from the Mayor.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. Southeastern Construction & Remodeling, LLC – Pabst Rd – PIDN: 60127170.000 – Requesting Sketch Plat approval of Holly Grove Subdivision, a 123 - lot Townhome Subdivision; PC recommends approval

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

The Planning Director explained that the Holly Grove Subdivision is proposed as a 123 -

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unit townhome subdivision and that the applicant is seeking sketch plat approval, which constitutes approval of the type, intensity, and phasing of the development. She outlined the subdivision approval process as sketch plat, preliminary plat, and final plat, noting that additional studies, including infrastructure, civil engineering, and wetland permitting, would be required at later stages. She explained that townhome subdivisions, by definition, can be placed on individual lots, which requires the developer to request sketch plat approval for a subdivision, whereas apartment developments would be located on a single lot and would not require Board approval or a public hearing.

The property is zoned R-1A (Special Apartment Use District), a designation in place since 1987. The 19.46-acre site proposes a density of 6.32 units per acre and includes private streets with 50-foot right-of-way, access from Government Street and Pabst Road, five-foot sidewalks, 21.2 proposed percent green space, a 1.17-acre pond, clubhouse, pool, and pickleball courts. A sewer pump station is proposed and shown on the sketch plat. A traffic study conducted by Neel-Schaffer determined that a left-turn lane on Government Street at Holly Grove Road is warranted. Public Works, Fire, and Engineering reviewed the sketch plat, with remaining comments to be addressed during the preliminary plat phase, including requests for civil plans, sewer studies, drainage analysis, and an approved Jurisdictional Determination from the Army Corps of Engineers. The Planning Director also stated that the developer agreed to provide a 30-foot wooded buffer along the eastern boundary adjacent to the National Park but that is not reflected in the sketch plat. She clarified that green space calculations exclude roadways and amenities but include the pond due to its 20-foot wide walkable perimeter.

Aldermen asked questions about the green space calculations and the traffic study conducted.

Applicant, Ross Bruce with Dantin Bruce Development, attended with his business partner, consultants, and legal counsel to present the project. He stated that while zoning allows up to 240 apartment units, they are proposing a lower-density development of 123 one- and two-story townhomes with garages. Amenities include a clubhouse, pool, fitness center, pickleball courts, and approximately 4.12 acres of green space. The development would be gated, privately maintained, and managed on-site, with responsibility for all infrastructure and stormwater facilities. He stated the property is not located in a flood zone and contains no jurisdictional wetlands, and that post-development stormwater runoff would not exceed pre-development levels. Preliminary discussions regarding sewer and water service have occurred, with potential upgrades to be addressed in later approvals.

Mr. Bruce further stated that residents would be subject to credit and criminal background checks and 12-month leases only, with no short-term or month-to-month rentals. Townhomes would range from 1,100 to 1,400 square feet, consist of two- and three-bedroom units, and include private backyards. Estimated rental rates would begin at approximately \$1,850 per month for two-bedroom units and \$2,050 per month for three-bedroom units, based on conservative underwriting assumptions. He clarified that the development is not intended to be low-income housing, stating that most residents would be renters by choice. He also noted that a community meeting was held in August,

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attended by approximately 45 residents, and described the meeting as civil and productive. He said that efforts were made to address the concerns by those in attendance.

Shane Bergin with Neel-Schaffer explained that a traffic impact study was conducted at the City's request using eight-hour turning movement counts at the intersections of Ocean Springs Road and Government Street and Government Street and Pabst Road. Traffic was projected to the 2030 build-out year using a conservative 2.6 percent annual growth rate. The study concluded that the development would result in minor delays, with the morning peak at Ocean Springs Road shifting from Level of Service B to C, minimal changes during the afternoon peak, and continued minimal delay at Pabst Road. A left-turn lane on Government Street is recommended.

Mr. Bruce stated the Planning Staff Report confirms the proposed development and sketch plat meet all applicable City ordinances and development code requirements, that no variances are requested, and that the use is permitted by right. He noted that the Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the sketch plat and requested Board approval of the Holly Grove sketch plat.

Public Input:

Pat Burlison, Tristan Armer, Mark Peterson, Nancy Brown-Peterson, Scott Hawkins, Becky Desporte, Norma Herrington, Derrick Charbonnet, Rhett McNorton, James Lewis, and Belinda Serato spoke in opposition to the sketch plat, citing concerns including traffic, drainage, infrastructure capacity, UDC requirements, school overcrowding, and potential impacts to nearby property values.

The following individuals signed in to speak but did not address the Board: Reese Brune, Lanis Noble, Sandra Peterson, Jenell Blum, Michael Kilgore, Lori Kilgore, Brian Clark, John Fryer, Sandy Dalgo, Deborah Parker, Chris Burns, Cody Crane, Kristen Crane, and Tom Ehrensing.

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

The Aldermen expressed concerns regarding drainage during heavy rain events, traffic study limitations and the desire for a longer traffic study, compatibility of the project with the surrounding area, infrastructure capacity, public opposition to the project, and unanswered questions raised during the hearing.

The applicant's attorney, Erich Nichols, and the applicant, Ross Bruce, requested rebuttal time. They stated that their application exceeded the requirements for sketch plat approval, noting that neither a traffic study nor a wetlands study was required at this stage, but both were completed at the request of the City and residents. They further stated that the development is below the maximum density permitted, meets all applicable requirements, and does not request any variances. They added that the applicant has been working with the City Planning Department for approximately six

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months.

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer, seconded by Alderman Tillis, and unanimously carried to table the decision on the sketch plat approval until the February 3, 2026, Regular Meeting to allow Aldermen to submit questions for further consideration.

AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Rickey Authement, Item 6-b, expressed concern that amending the Floodway Ordinance could reduce the City's rating and result in increased flood insurance costs for all policyholders within the City limits.

Libby Miller, Item 6-b, explained the distinction between a floodway and a flood zone and stated that prior to annexation, property owners were able to build on their lots or rebuild if structures were damaged more than 50 percent. She stated that following annexation and application of the City's Floodway Ordinance, property owners are no longer able to build within the floodway, even with a FEMA no-rise certification, nor rebuild existing homes if damage exceeds 50 percent. She stated that this has significantly decreased property values, rendering the properties unbuildable and unsellable.

Lanis Noble, Item 6-b, stated that he also owns property within the newly annexed floodway and expressed concern regarding the devaluation of his property. He distributed photographs for the Board's review.

Reese Brune, Item 8-c, stated that he attempted to work with insurance companies to retain a tree on his property but was informed that it posed too great a liability and must be removed. He stated that his insurance coverage was dropped, but he was given 30 days to remove the tree in order to have coverage reinstated.

Tony Miller, Item 6-b, expressed concern that amending the Floodway Ordinance could result in increased insurance rates citywide. He questioned why insurance rates would increase if FEMA allows construction within a floodway when supported by a no-rise certification.

Alderman Blackman responded that the City participates in the Community Rating System (CRS) and is currently a Class 8, receiving a 10 percent insurance discount under the existing ordinance. He stated that if the City fails to follow CRS guidelines, the discount could be reduced or eliminated, resulting in increased insurance rates. The Building Official clarified that if the Floodway Ordinance is amended or removed and only FEMA minimum standards are followed, the City's CRS classification and associated discount could be reduced or eliminated.

Cody Crane, Item 6-b, stated that his entire property is located within the newly annexed floodway and is now effectively worthless. He requested that the ordinance be amended

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to allow construction within the floodway when supported by a FEMA no-rise certification.

Chris Burns, Item 6-b, reiterated concerns that properties and homes within the floodway have been devalued and cannot be built or rebuilt if damaged beyond 50 percent. He also discussed impacts related to insurance availability and emergency services.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Reschedule February Recess Meeting due to Mardi Gras

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to authorize rescheduling the February 17, 2026, Recess Meeting of the Board of Aldermen to Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at its regular time and place, due to Mardi Gras Day, in accordance with Ordinance 2022-01, and direct staff to publish the required legal notice as prescribed by ordinance.

b. Floodway Ordinance – Discussion and Direction

Alderman Pfeiffer addressed the Board regarding the Floodway Ordinance, noting that the ordinance was adopted in 2020 and that its variance and appeal provisions had not previously been applied. She stated that under municipal governance practice, volunteer boards such as the Zoning Adjustment Board (ZAB) serve in an advisory capacity and do not act as the final governing authority.

Alderman Pfeiffer presented recommended amendments providing that the Zoning Adjustment Board shall hear variance requests and appeals under the Floodway Ordinance and forward written recommendations, including findings of fact, to the Board of Aldermen, and that the Board of Aldermen shall serve as the final administrative authority for approval, denial, or modification of any variance or appeal, with judicial review available as provided by law.

A motion was made by Alderman Messenger, seconded by Alderman Tillis, and unanimously carried to schedule a workshop to discuss amending the Floodway Ordinance under the city ordinance to allow for construction within the floodways when supported by a FEMA Certificate.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Alderman Hinton, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda, excluding items 7-e, pulled by Alderman Stennis; 7-f, pulled by Alderman Pfeiffer; and 7-u, pulled by Alderman Tillis.

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Mayor:

- a. Approve the Run, Walk, Bike Permit Application for the Valentine Bridge Beach Front 8K Run on February 14, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., at Fort Maurepas OS Bridge/Front Beach at no cost to the City, the applicant pays the associated event costs
- b. Approve the Special Event Permit Application for the Sunset on Cancer Run on October 3, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.; registration and family events will be held at the Fort, with the run course down the beach to the bridge, halfway up the bridge, and back; the applicant to pay all associated costs
- c. Authorize the Run, Walk, Bike Permit Application for the Rotary Club of Ocean Springs 18th Annual 5K RACE on October 17, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., using the Front Beach/OS Bridge Route; No cost to the City, the applicant pays the associated event costs
- d. Authorize a \$250.00 Advocate Membership Level donation to the Mississippi Heritage Trust
- e. **ADDED:** Approve the Special Event Permit Applications for the Ocean Springs Carnival Association events for 2026, including the Mardi Hop on January 10, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., beginning on Bowen Avenue, proceeding to Bellande Avenue to City Hall for a toast to the Mayor, and concluding at Mosaics Restaurant, with the applicant responsible for all associated costs; and the Mardi Gras Night Parade on Friday, February 13, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., utilizing the regular parade route, with City overtime costs associated with the event

Alderman Stennis clarified that the events should be approved under two separate permits. The Mayor responded that while the events do require two separate permits, they were combined into a single consent agenda item because they involve the same organization and were added to the agenda due to an error on the City's part.

A motion was made by Alderman Stennis, seconded by Alderman Blackman, and unanimously carried to approve the Special Event Permit Applications for the Ocean Springs Carnival Association events for 2026, including the Mardi Hop on January 10, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., beginning on Bowen Avenue, proceeding to Bellande Avenue to City Hall for a toast to the Mayor, and concluding at Mosaics Restaurant, with the applicant responsible for all associated costs; and the Mardi Gras Night Parade on Friday, February 13, 2026, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., utilizing the regular parade route, with City overtime costs associated with the event.

City Clerk:

- f. Approve Minutes: Regular Meeting December 2, 2025

Alderman Pfeiffer stated that, pursuant to Mississippi Code § 21-15-33, the minutes

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exceeded the 30-day submission requirement and requested that future minutes be submitted in a more timely manner.

A motion was made by Alderman Pfeiffer, seconded by Alderman Stennis, and unanimously carried to approve the Regular Meeting minutes of December 2, 2025.

- g. Approve Minutes: Special Call Meeting December 10, 2025
- h. Approve Minutes: Recess Meeting December 16, 2025
- i. Accept the December 2025 Aged Receivables Report

Fire Department:

- j. Accept donations of a 5-foot by 8-foot American Flag and a 3-foot by 5-foot Mississippi State Flag from Woodmen Life Insurance Company for Fire Station 1

Human Resources/Risk Management:

- k. Accept resignation of Police Officer Charles Hoggard effective January 7, 2026; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position
- l. Authorize promotion of Firefighter II Chad Jay to Captain, effective January 17, 2026; \$18.64 hourly rate; six-months probationary status
- m. Authorize removing Firefighter Dawson Wicker from probationary status to full time status, effective January 6, 2026
- n. Accept resignation of Firefighter Bryan Yates, effective January 13, 2026; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position
- o. Accept resignation of Parks Ground Maintenance Claude Adams effective December 30, 2025; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position

Planning Department:

- p. Approve UDC Committee Meeting Minutes for November 19, 2025

Planning Commission (PC):

- q. Accept PC Meeting Minutes for November 12, 2025
- r. Approve a request for a Residential Short-Term Rental Permit at 1916 Stuart Ave - PIDN: 61455050.000; PC recommends approval

Zoning Adjustment Board (ZAB):

- s. Accept ZAB Meeting Minutes for November 12, 2025
- t. Deny a variance of a side yard setback from the required 10' to 7'-10" on the south side of the property to construct an addition on the existing house at 236 Holcomb Blvd - PIDN: 61180025.000; ZAB recommends denial

Building Department:

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- u. Approve the Building Official's recommendations for the tree applications received through December 23, 2025

Alderman Tillis stated that he reviewed the trees associated with the five removal applications and raised a question regarding the oak tree at 1119 West Cherokee Avenue, specifically whether removal was necessary. The Building Official responded that his determination was for the small, horizontally growing oak tree to be removed, while the large live oak and magnolia tree would remain.

A motion was made by Alderman Tillis, seconded by Alderman Wade, and unanimously carried to approve the Building Official's recommendations for the tree removal applications received through December 23, 2025.

- v. Accept Code Enforcement Report through December 29th, 2025

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 Pfeiffer, 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: Accept the Monthly Budget Report

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

- c. Building: Discuss tree appeal for tree removal request at 285 Holcomb previously denied at BOA Meeting 12/16/2025

The Building Official explained that at the previous meeting, the Board of Aldermen denied the request for removal of a live oak tree located at 285 Holcomb Boulevard, and the homeowner has appealed that decision.

Reese Brune, property owner, provided a letter from the insurance company stating that the limb presents a liability hazard and must be removed in order to comply with the policy. He stated that the insurance policy has been canceled; however, a 30-day reinstatement period has been provided, contingent upon removal of the tree. He explained that the tree contractor advised that removing only the large limb hanging over the garage would require additional trimming and pruning and would eventually warrant removal of the trunk due to a notable weak point within the tree cavity. Mr. Brune further stated that he attempted to remove the garage structure from the insurance policy and pursued other remedies, none of which were approved by the insurance company. He added that he contacted two additional insurance providers, both of which also required removal of the tree in order to maintain an active policy.

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A motion was made by Alderman Wade and seconded by Alderman Blackman to grant the appeal and allow removal of the live oak tree at 285 Holcomb Boulevard. The motion carried with the following vote:

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

Nay: Alderman Stennis

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Gerri Mayfield asked about striping and sidewalk improvements on School Street. The Mayor responded that the area will be painted soon and will be designated as a sidewalk through striping on the asphalt, rather than the installation of a separate concrete sidewalk.

MAYOR AND ALDERMEN'S FORUM

Alderman Messenger requested that a date and time be set for the work session. It was agreed that the work session would be held on Friday, January 16, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.

Alderman Blackman requested that the infrastructure studies be updated. He asked the Project Manager about the guardrails on Government Street. The Project Manager replied that a second quote is needed, as the first quote exceeded \$5,000.

A motion was made by Alderman Blackman, seconded by Alderman Pfeiffer, and unanimously carried to authorize the employment of Brandon Holloway, Water Laborer, effective January 7, 2026, at an hourly rate of \$16.00, with a one-year probationary status, pending successful completion of all pre-employment requirements.

Alderman Pfeiffer asked whether the infrastructure studies would provide a broader picture with identified costs and a prioritized list of projects.

Alderman Wade thanked the Fire Department, Police Department, and Public Works for their efforts in hosting a successful New Year's Eve Ball Drop event.

Alderman Stennis asked about several Ward 2 projects, including Rayborn Avenue and Russell Avenue. The Public Works Director responded that work would be completed as soon as possible. Alderman Stennis also asked about the status of the Front Beach property. The Project Manager replied that the Department of Marine Resources will be holding a public hearing regarding the bulkhead and riprap for the property. Alderman Stennis then asked about the status of the Lovelace Oak and whether it would remain or be removed. The Mayor responded that the issue would be addressed after Mardi Gras.

Alderman Tillis requested that the Public Works Director consider adding signage or road striping at Bristol Boulevard and Nottingham Road to indicate a right-turn-only lane, noting that he has received complaints that the traffic pattern is not clearly marked. He

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also asked about the cost of a traffic study. Alderman Tillis asked the Project Manager about the status of the Fort Bayou project, and she replied that the project has been completed, but a meeting is being held to determine any issues where additional funding may be utilized.

Alderman Hinton asked about the progress of the Highway 90 widening project. The Project Manager replied that efforts are currently focused on securing funding to relocate utilities and that the construction presently underway involves the relocation of JCUA's force main. Alderman Hinton also requested that Russell Avenue be cleaned up.

Alderman Blackman stated that during the last fiscal year, Ward 5 funds were used for Public Works to purchase black paint for street signs, but it had not been used. The Public Works Director responded that he would check on the matter.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

RECESS UNTIL 6:00 P.M. on JANUARY 20, 2026

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

The meeting ended at 8:46 p.m.



Mayor Cox



City Clerk Christine Millard





**REGULAR MEETING - AMENDED AGENDA
CITY OF OCEAN SPRINGS - MAYOR & BOARD OF ALDERMEN
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026 - 6:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CERTIFICATES

- a. Recognition of employment years of service: 10 years – Police Research Analyst Jesse Breland and Custodian Josette Kelley, 5 years – Firefighter Harris Paul Williams and Head Mechanic Bryan Farve

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. Southeastern Construction & Remodeling, LLC – Pabst Rd – PIDN: 60127170.000 – Requesting Sketch Plat approval of Holly Grove Subdivision, a 123-lot Townhome Subdivision; PC recommends approval

5. AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT *** The Public is invited to address the Board for up to 5 minutes each for a maximum period of 30 minutes, **ONLY regarding issues listed on this agenda.** The Board will take all comments under advisement for potential action if warranted. **Please identify yourself and the agenda item.** If no agenda item is stated, you will be asked to hold your comment until General Public Comment at the end of the meeting.*

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Reschedule February Recess Meeting due to Mardi Gras
- b. Floodway Ordinance – Discussion and Direction

7. CONSENT AGENDA ** All matters listed under Consent Agenda are considered to be routine by the Board of Aldermen and will be enacted by one motion. There will not be a separate discussion of these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be considered separately.*

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- b. Approve the Special Event Permit Application for the Sunset on Cancer Run on October 3, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.; registration and family events will be held at the Fort, with the run course down the beach to the bridge, halfway up the bridge, and back; the applicant to pay all associated costs
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Fire Department:

- j. Accept donations of a 5-foot by 8-foot American Flag and a 3-foot by 5-foot Mississippi State Flag from Woodmen Life Insurance Company for Fire Station 1

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- k. Accept resignation of Police Officer Charles Hoggard effective January 7, 2026; authorize to begin the process of filling the vacant position
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Planning Department:

- p. Approve UDC Committee Meeting Minutes for November 19, 2025

Planning Commission (PC):

- q. Accept PC Meeting Minutes for November 12, 2025
- r. Approve a request for a Residential Short-Term Rental Permit at 1916 Stuart Ave - PIDN: 61455050.000; PC recommends approval

Zoning Adjustment Board (ZAB):

- s. Accept ZAB Meeting Minutes for November 12, 2025
- t. Deny a variance of a side yard setback from the required 10' to 7'-10" on the south side of the property to construct an addition on the existing house at 236 Holcomb Blvd - PIDN: 61180025.000; ZAB recommends denial

Building Department:

- u. Approve the Building Official's recommendations for the tree applications received through December 23, 2025
- v. Accept Code Enforcement Report through December 29th, 2025

8. 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
- b. City Clerk: Accept the Monthly Budget Report
- c. Building: Discuss tree appeal for tree removal request at 285 Holcomb previously denied at BOA Meeting 12/16/2025

9. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT *The public is invited to address the Board, for up to 5 minutes each for a maximum period of 30 minutes. The Board will take all comments under advisement to take potential action at a later date if warranted. Priority will be given to Ocean Springs residents and Business Owners. **Please identify yourself before speaking.***

10. MAYOR AND ALDERMEN'S FORUM

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

RECESS UNTIL 6:00 P.M. on JANUARY 20, 2026