

August 25 , 2020

The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Fairmont was held at 7:00 p.m. on the 25th day of August, 2020, at the Public Safety Building located at 500 Quincy Street in Fairmont, West Virginia.

Mayor Merrifield called the meeting to order.

Councilmembers present were:

First District	Joshua D. (Josh) Rice	
Second District	Frank G. Yann	(by phone)
Third District	Karl (David) Kennedy	(by phone)
Fourth District	Kenneth (Brad) Merrifield	
Seventh District	Philip R. (Phil) Mason	
Eighth District	Thomas (Tom) Mainella	
Ninth District	Donna M. Blood	

Absent:

Fifth District	Barry H. Bledsoe
Sixth District	Dora Kay Grubb

Also present were:

City Manager	Valerie A. Means	(by phone)
City Attorney	Kevin Sansalone	
City Clerk	Janet L. Keller	
Police Chief	Steve Shine	
Fire Chief	Ed Simmons	
Utility Controller	Mark Moore	

IN RE: EXCUSE COUNCILMEMBER GRUBB

Councilmember Mason moved to excuse Councilmember Grubb from tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rice.

The Mayor declared Councilmmeber Grubb excused from tonight's meeting by voice vote of Council.

IN RE: EXCUSE COUNCILMEMBER BLEDSOE

The Mayor moved to excuse Councilmember Bledsoe from tonight's meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mason.

The Mayor declared Councilmember Bledsoe excused from tonight's meeting by majority vote of Council with Councilmembers Mainella and Rice voting not to excuse

Councilmember Bledsoe.

IN RE: OPENING CEREMONIES

Rev. Joseph Konikattil gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag led by Councilmember Mainella.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Merrifield noted that each member of Council had received a copy of the minutes from the Regular Meeting held on August 11, 2020.

Councilmember Mason moved to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Blood.

The Mayor declared the minutes approved as submitted by voice vote of Council.

IN RE: PROCLAMATION PRESENTED TO COLUMBUS CARPENTER

Mayor Merrifield presented a proclamation to Columbus Carpenter, Retired US Army Corporal, for his service as a Korean War veteran and honored him for a life well lived helping his fellow veterans and his fellow man.

IN RE: PROCLAMATION PRESENTED FOR WOMEN 'S EQUALITY DAY

Mayor Merrifield presented a proclamation to Barbara Channell with the Morgan Morgan Chapter of the DAR recognizing August 26th as the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote. The Mayor proclaimed August 26th as "Women's Equality Day".

PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings scheduled for this meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN RE: COUNCILMEMBER BLEDSOE 'S SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS

Councilmember Mainella stated that he was very sad to see all of the people outside of the Council Chambers and the ones who came here to voice their displeasure about something that one of us said. He said that he has been on Council for a long time and he is embarrassed, saddened and cannot understand why. He said that if David Kennedy would have said it, it would have been just business as usual. We all know his history and how he has sabotaged about everything that he has ever done on his year and half on City Council. With Barry Bledsoe, he is really surprised. He has been around Barry for 20 years, at the Rescue Squad, he's a good EMT and runs a good business, he owns a business, and he was very surprised to hear the comments from him. He said that it reflects badly on us and he is sorry to everyone that he has offended

but he has offended us also. He said sorry everyone has to be here for this reason.

Councilmember Blood stated that it is sad to see everybody here but at the same time, she is glad that so many are here to support Delegate Danielle Walker and to support decency and morality. She went on to say that we have been plagued by this since she has been on Council which has been only a year and half now and this is the third or fourth time we have to deal with our Councilmembers using hurtful, deplorable language for women and toward minorities. She said that she was horrified by it and she feels like she should apologize for him but he doesn't represent our viewpoint. He doesn't represent most of us on City Council.

Councilmember Blood then read a letter from Rev. James Norton, a resident of 13 Fairway Lane, with his suggestion for improving Fairmont's public image.

Councilmember Mason agreed with the comments made by Councilmembers Mainella and Blood. He said the comments made by a couple members of City Council do not represent Fairmont. Why the comments were made, he does not know and he does not understand it and has not seen that kind of behavior or attitude from Councilmember Bledsoe. We have to deal with it since it has been said but the comments said do not represent us.

Councilmember Rice said that he agreed with all of the other Councilmembers. He owes everyone an apology and that is something that he will have to do himself.

Councilmember Yann thanked Delegate Walker and all of those that will speak tonight or those that have written to Council and hopefully their actions will stop this shameful rhetoric and hateful type of speech.

Mayor Merrifield stated that it certainly is okay to disagree. We have that right to disagree but we need to do it in the proper manner and we cannot resort to name calling. He said when we had a few gatherings earlier in the year and we had some disagreements and walking in the streets, he mentioned to a group there that it's quite simple, try to understand the other person, truly try to understand them and even if you can't, at least respect them and if we do that and we have a lot of work to do, all of us, if we do that, it's going to guide us to where we need to go. He stated that he feels bad for the things that were said because it hurt a lot of his friends. When anybody hurts your friends, nobody should be called names, we have all seen it and nothing ever good comes about it. How do you know you are saying the wrong thing, when it offends somebody else, that's how you know, period.

IN RE: NEW EAST SIDE FIRE STATION

Councilmember Kennedy stated he has been keeping his eye on the job site of the new East Side Fire Station. He congratulated Council and all of the people who have brought that to being.

CITIZENS PETITIONS

IN RE: SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS BY COUNCILMEMBER BLEDSOE AGAINST WEST VIRGINIA DELEGATE DANIELLE WALKER AND VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE KAMALA HARRIS

DELEGATE SAMMI BROWN, from Jefferson County, spoke against the comments made by Councilmember Bledsoe. She said that Council should not tolerate Councilmember Bledsoe's words and should at least move to censure him. She said we have an opportunity here in the City of Fairmont to course correct. She said that she is very explicitly asking for censure. She noted that you want folks to come home to the State of West Virginia but that cannot happen if we look to our local government. It matters so much what we do in this moment. All eyes are on this moment and hate has no home here.

DELEGATE AMANDA ESTEP-BURTON, from Kanawha County, read a letter from the West Virginia House Democratic Women's Caucus members. She said as duly elected local officials, each of you represent all citizens in your individual and collective precincts. Your responsibility is shown every day and throughout every aspect of your life - both personally and professionally. That is why the members of the WV House Democratic Women's Caucus write to publicly censure and sharply rebuke Councilmember Bledsoe. It is clear through his recent comments on social media, that Councilmember Bledsoe is no longer worthy of the honor of elected office. His comments about female elected officials, and specifically women of color, clearly express his misogynistic, racist, and disrespectful views of others who are not male or white. This type of behavior will no longer be ignored or swept under the proverbial rug. They will continue to bring awareness every time an elected official or anyone entrusted to serve the citizens of the state violates their Oath of Office or that trust by insulting over half of the population. Sexist, racist or other inappropriate comments or actions will no longer be tolerated in West Virginia.

DELEGATE BARBARA FLEISCHAUER, from Monongalia County, condemned Councilmember Bledsoe's description of Delegate Walker. She said that they have been deeply wounded by the language of people that serve on this Council and most do not share those views. She said that we need to have elected officials who would like us. The idea that someone would call a major candidate for the vice presidency a whore, sexualizing and making that kind of nasty statement is just astonishing in this day and age. How retro is that? She went on to say that after he makes a horrible comment about a local elected official, using the word "satanic" about someone who is a deeply religious person. I just can't imagine how that kind of commentary is appropriate for somebody who is an elected official. I know he did not say that during a Council meeting, but personally she would not want to have someone say that about her or anyone. It is deeply, deeply wounding. She went on to say that he needs to be censured and rebuked and she questioned his fitness to serve when he is talking about half of the population. We are talking about racism and we are talking about sexism and he has brought religion into it. This country was founded on religious freedom and just trash somebody that way with those religious overtones is very peculiar. She said that she would hope this Council will make a very strong statement of disapproval of censure

and the citizens of this community need to say hate has no place in Fairmont or in West Virginia. Hate speech like this should have no place in our country.

DELEGATE MIKE CAPUTO, from Marion County, spoke on behalf of the entire leadership of the minority caucus, minority leader Tim Miley and the entire Democratic caucus for the WV House of Delegates. He said if someone asked him to call Delegate Danielle Walker some names, he could give us a whole list of those, among them might be compassionate, among them might be a fighter for everyone whether they voted for her or not, a fighter for the underprivileged, a fighter for those who can't fight for themselves, respected might be another one of those names, one that is respected by not only the voters of her district but the colleagues that she serves with. She also prays for the sick, she is a very God fearing individual, she prays for the sick on the House floor constantly and he knows that she has prayed for the health of Councilmember Bledsoe to be restored because that is what is in her heart. She has a heart that is bigger than this building but "satanic". For someone to refer to Delegate Danielle Walker as satanic, I just can't understand how anyone could go there, particularly Councilmember Bledsoe. It is obvious that he doesn't know her, it is obvious that he just pulled this name out for maybe reasons that none of us wants to talk about, maybe because she is a woman, maybe because she is a strong woman, maybe because she is an African-American woman, maybe because she is an elected leader from a political party that he is not too keen on, maybe because it's different than the way he looks or the way he thinks or the way he votes. Satanic, no, absolutely not. It amazed him that those words came out of his mouth. It was 100 years ago that the 19th Amendment was passed and 100 years later a member of this governing body, Councilmember Bledsoe, has not made one hurtful and derogatory remark, he has made two. He finds it strange that they were both against African-American leaders, African-American women of a different political party. He did not understand how we can tolerate that kind of behavior. We, as elected officials, need to do all we can to end racism, discrimination, and hate, not only in our town, not only in our county, not only in our state, but in our country. It is time we put that behind us and we cannot, absolutely cannot, put that behind us when we have elected officials name calling. The name calling has got to stop and he trusts that Council will take action. One thing about Danielle Walker is that she don't need anybody to defend her, she can defend herself better than anybody he has ever been around in his entire life. She is the toughest of the toughest but it is tough for her to be here today because she feels like she has the weight of the world on her shoulders, but she's tough and is up for the challenge and she has never walked away from a fight and is not going to start now.

ZACHARY FANCHER, 721 Locust Avenue, said satanic, communist, hoe, these are just three of the many hurtful words that certain members of this Council have levied against members of our human family. These words are not acceptable to many of you and he appreciates Council's willingness to stand up and say that hate has no place in the Friendly City. Do better, be better, think before you speak, treat others how you want to be treated. Grow up and lead by example.

REV. WESLEY DOBBS and members of the Fairmont Pastoral Alliance addressed Council. Rev. Dobbs said that Councilmember Bledsoe met with the Pastoral Alliance

last Thursday and the next day he talked about Delegate Walker calling her satanic. He said censorship does not help. They go right out and do the same thing over again. The City, itself, must bring about a policy and let it be known that if you do anything out of what you should be about, then you stand more than just censorship. Mr. Kennedy was censured twice and all he got was a pat on the hand. Everything is going downhill not because of the people and not because of African-Americans but because of our government and we need to get it together. He never thought Fairmont had a problem, but maybe we do. He said that has to cease, enough is enough and he wants it known tonight that they are going to stand as African-Americans and we don't want you to give us anything, let us work for whatever we receive, and whatever we receive, give us credit for that. He said that he cannot respect Mr. Bledsoe or Mr. Kennedy. Prayer didn't work because he came out the same night and said something else.

DAVID KNAPP, 1107 Delaware Avenue, also spoke regarding the remarks of Councilmember Bledsoe. He said here we are again, three strikes, somebody is out and he's not even here tonight. This is unexpected behavior from this individual and that this is something they never believed this individual could do but they are dragging the City through the mud. He told Council to lead at their level. This is unacceptable. He wants to hear everyone running for office say that they are not that kind of a person. He is sick and tired of it as is everyone in this room and out in the foyer. He asked Council to take charge of this situation. He then asked Council to draft and pass a Code of Conduct for elected officials in this City that has some teeth in it.

JULIA HAMILTON, 600 Jones Avenue, Morgantown, added her voice to those calling for action against the bigotry and hatred that had made repeat appearances with multiple Councilmembers in this room. Elected officials swear an oath to uphold their duties as representatives of the people they serve. Councilmembers Bledsoe and Kennedy may have been the elected officials who have boldly disregarded their duty to serve their full constituencies, I would argue that the remaining Councilmembers have similarly failed in their responsibilities. She said that she stands with Delegate Walker. She then asked Council to condemn Councilmember Bledsoe's remarks and ask him resign.

ROMELIA HODGES, 614 Benoni Avenue, said that Fairmont has a race problem and racism is not always what you say but it is garnered by your actions. After a lengthy presentation, Ms. Hodges mentioned the following:

- She thanked Councilmembers Bledsoe and Kennedy for modern day racism.
- She said the mural at Palatine Park is a disgrace and said the City should not speak to their culture. The mural is a constant reminder of pain. She then asked that Aunt Hat's portrait be removed from the wall.
- There is a constant threat of attacks on women from this Council.
- On behalf of the City, it was discrimination to deny her mother's funeral to be held at Windmill Park when she requested that it be held here. She said that the City owes her an apology.

JOEY GARCIA, a resident of Fairmont, spoke in support of Delegate Danielle Walker. He said that Danielle is a friend of his and he has been able to see first-hand how her representation and love for this state has no boundaries. He then listed multiple things that she has done in her community to make her community and West Virginia a better place to live. He said that this has to stop. This is everything that is wrong with politics. He said that Delegate Walker is doing everything that is right about public service.

NILA HUDSON, a resident of Fairmont, also addressed Council regarding the comments made by Councilmember Bledsoe. She said that she was her sister's keeper. She said that Council is saying that Councilmember Bledsoe does not represent them, but he does. He represents every Council person here so when he says what he says, he is basically talking about your mother, your auntie, your grandmother and is that okay. This man has repeatedly said racist and hateful things in Fairmont and nothing is being done. Enough is enough. The black women in this town is sick and tired. The black people in this town are sick and tired. It has to end now. There are 714 black women in Fairmont and he doesn't know any of them but he chose to talk about a Delegate in Morgantown who is doing nothing but helping Fairmont, how is that okay. She said that if you are not taking action, it doesn't matter what you say. Councilmember Kennedy and Bledsoe need to be removed. Look at yourself, you have not spoken up about it and you are sitting there letting everyone else speak with blank looks on your face. I am sick and tired. Would you call your mother that, your grandma, your auntie, your niece, or cousin. Would you all say the hurtful things that he is saying? Quit with the excuses. She said it was time for some action.

JOSH CARLISLE, 3866 Freedom Highway, stated that he was not here to defend everything that Councilmember Bledsoe has said but he addressed the comment made about Delegate Walker. He recited several bible verses before saying on January 15, 2020, Delegate Walker voted against the born alive bill and the remainder of his discussion was about that matter. He then said that today he was offended by a post from Councilmember Blood where she called the President of the United States a "con man".

AMY BOLYARD, Dellslow, WV, read a statement from Allen Whitt, President of the Family Policy Council, who could not be here in person, against Delegate Walker. In the letter, he thanked Councilmember Bledsoe for his tireless efforts to defend unborn babies and stated that he was an asset to Fairmont.

Ms. Bolyard stated that Delegate Walker is guilty of a crime of encouraging the murder of not only unborn babies but is also encouraging men and women's restrooms and encouraging drag queens to read to our children. If she is asking a city to pay for a Black Lives Matter crosswalk, then let's do a Jewish Lives Matter because we know that millions of Jews were annihilated. She then asked for her resignation from her position as a Delegate. Do not accuse someone of racism because they use a term like satanic when Pastor Josh Carlisle as he did a wonderful job explaining from the Holy Bible the definition of satanic, what it means and what Councilmember Bledsoe was most likely referring as and there were supporters in the back laughing at him.

BENNIE KYLE, a resident in Councilmember Bledsoe's district, stated that the person who should be here tonight is the City Manager but she is not here. He said that Councilmember Bledsoe is a very disrespectful, racist person. He then asked City Attorney Sansalone to draw up a petition and tell him how many signatures he needs to get to remove Councilmembers Bledsoe and Kennedy from the City Council.

Councilmember Mainella interjected to say that the City Manager was not here tonight because she was on sick leave.

Mr. Kyle then asked Council to order Mr. Sanslone to draw up the petition to remove Councilmembers Bledsoe and Kennedy.

DELEGATE EVAN HANSEN, from Monongalia County, spoke in support of Delegate Danielle Walker. He said that what was said by Councilmember Bledsoe was hateful, bigoted, racist comments and they were both directed at black women, black women leaders, black women public servants, and he did not think that was a coincidence. He said that it was up to all of us in elected office to model his behavior no matter what is being done at the national level. It is up to all of us as local elected officials to communicate with our constituents and to listen and hear and have empathy. He said that Delegate Walker is a powerful leader and commands so much respect. He requested that Council issue a censure and to take the strongest action possible.

ROBIN HEARTSLOVE, from Monongalia County, stated that she was one of the drag queens that Councilmember Bledsoe referenced on social media. She said that she had dreaded and looked forward to standing before Council tonight. She said that several months ago she emailed each and every City Councilmember about racist, transphobic, homophobic remarks that Barry Bledsoe posted on his Facebook. She said that she was met with zero replies. It could have stopped and not gotten to the point we are here today. He was so inflamed at the thought of a Black Lives Matter crosswalk that he had to go on an All Lives Matter attention. Delegate Walker walks a more Christ-like path in her sleep than self-proclaimed Christians do on Easter Sunday. Delegate Walker had delivered groceries and medications through this entire pandemic, she has contacted the Unemployment Agency on behalf of countless people to help them get benefits to keep roofs over their heads, food on their table and to help get their bills paid. She has organized free Covid testing in Mon County and helped with neighboring counties. She is a Delegate for all West Virginians. To call her anything less than a Saint would minimize the daily way she exhibits one love in our State. She said that they do not ask for respect, they demand it. Everyone deserves the respect of one another. She asked Council to take the strongest action possible against Councilmember Bledsoe.

DELEGATE CODY THOMPSON, from Randolph County, also spoke in support of Delegate Danielle Walker. He talked about Delegate Walker. He said they both came in as freshman and grew and learned together. He said if you are hungry she will feed you, if you need clothing she will clothe you, if you are upset she will comfort you, she will bend over backwards to take care of you and be there for you. He said as a proud gay man and the only openly-elected to the Legislature, words do hurt. He said the right

thing to do is to censure Councilmember Bledsoe. He said that Fairmont is a beautiful city and we want all of West Virginia to do well but we are not doing well with having homophobic, transphobic, racist comments made about members of the Legislature and people in general. He went on to say that Councilmember Bledsoe also made comments about Senator Kamala Harris a “hoe” then makes comments about his colleague and calls her satanic. He said that the main fact is that it is a race issue, a woman issue, misogynistic, they are strong black women and that frightens some people. We are going to see stronger, black women in office. He closed by saying that when he heard this, he had to come to speak about it. We all hold ourselves to a higher standard, we represent people, and we are their voice but words used to his friend and colleague that is not representation.

CINDY FRITCH, former Delegate from Monongalia County, addressed Council on behalf of Councilmember Bledsoe. She said Councilmember Bledsoe’s use of the word “satanic” stemmed from Delegate Walker’s support of Drag Queen Story Hour at the Morgantown Public Library, as well as her vote against the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which passed the House of Delegates last session. Those may have been overly enthusiastic words he used, but from her experiences and from his reasoning it was because of her involvement with the Drag Queen story time and she does not believe he was being racist at all. She did vote for infanticide and there were only five delegates in West Virginia who did so. Now, that is not godly. A lot of things she’s done could be interpreted as not godly. She said isn’t it enough that the “mob” has made your Councilmember feel abandoned and alone. When will the “mob” come for you?

MIKKA WOLENSKI, a resident of Morgantown, said that when he heard comments made about Delegate Walker, he felt compelled to be here. He said that she is one of the most compassionate, loving, caring people who he knows in his life. He said that she has had death threats made against her, she has had her house vandalized, she has had to install security systems at her house, and she has had those problems because of the stand that she is willing to take. She stands up for the people that don’t have a voice. These people that have made death threats and thrown eggs at her house, she would invite them to her house and cook dinner for them and sit down and talk to them and find out what is wrong with them that made them have that feeling and try to change their mind. He then encouraged Council to hear these people voices, hear how the words are affecting them and do what they can. He said leaders give credit to people when things go well and you take responsibility when things don’t go well. He said that Council has the power to take action and hold these people accountable. He then asked Council to censure Councilmember Bledsoe and show this community that these comments are not acceptable and spread the message of love that everyone is welcome in this community and no matter who you are or what walk of life you have, you are welcome and you can feel safe here.

DELEGATE DANIELLE WALKER, from Morgantown, was the last to address Council about the comments. She said that she was here to express her concern and disappointment as an elected official. The blatant disrespect for elected officials who are women, women of color, and black, is hurtful, embarrassing and disrespectful. She

said that she was the only black elected official in the North Central West Virginia and she was called satanic because she supports Black Lives Matter, and the LBGTO IA+ community. She said that she was hurt and scared and one Facebook comment was a direct threat of her being. As an elected official we must do better, Fairmont. We must call for accountability and the time for action was yesterday. The time for action is today. The time for action will be tomorrow. Words hurt just as stick and stones. Words can speak life, words can speak death, and words can be a call of action good, bad or indifferent. What will your Council do to stand with all of your residents and visit us who are diverse in race, culture, gender and religion? She said that when she visits new small businesses in Fairmont, she feels welcome. When she comes to celebrate Juneteenth, events at FSU and Pierpont, she feels safe, she feels welcome. When she volunteers for backpack drives here in Fairmont, coat give-a-ways at the skating rink, free Covid-19 testing, she feels welcome but not anymore because of words, because of these words. "If you don't get rid of that satanic, Danielle Walker, you might as well give up". She said she is a child of God and she does not need to promote her belief and her heavenly father teaching the words because she does it through her work. Words without work are a waste. Fairmont, you are not a waste. Marion County, you are not a waste. West Virginia is not a waste. Mountaineers are not a waste. Black people are not a waste. LBGTO IA+ community is not a waste and she is not a waste. See me. Protect me. Respect me. Love me. Say something and follow through with consequences. We must acknowledge our similarities which makes us human and celebrate our differences which makes us people. She then thanked Council for their patience with each and every person who directed Council and for truly listening to the people that spoke. She told Council they have a decision to make. That comment was made because the City of Morgantown is putting in a Black Lives Matter crosswalk and the feeling that she is feeling before Council, not one child should feel this way in the City of Fairmont. She said that we are so keen to protect animals and not human beings. We celebrated the 100th year of the 19th Amendment but she is here to tell you, as a black woman, it wasn't for her in 1920. She said since the age of three, her parents taught her three strikes: 1) you are black; 2) you are a female and 3) you are poor. She is here to tell everyone that with microaggression, institutional racism is still racism and where there is racism, there is racist.

Mayor Merrifield read letters from the following:

MARION COUNTY DELEGATION: We stand with our colleague Delegate Danielle Walker who was recently attacked on social media by Councilmember Bledsoe. Councilmember Bledsoe has been using his social media platform to make racist, discriminatory remarks. He was totally out of line, and his remarks are unacceptable. Councilmember Bledsoe was voted into office to serve all of the residents in his district, not just the ones who look and vote like him. Delegate Walker deserves an apology for his remarks. We proudly stand with our colleague and will stand in solidarity with her at the Council meeting.

HOUSE MINORITY LEADER TIM MILEY: I was shocked and disappointed to learn of the recent comments by Councilmember Bledsoe directed to my colleague and friend, Danielle Walker. Delegate Walker is a true public servant and serves her constituents

and her community with emotion. She is passionate for the people she represents and for the issues that affect their daily lives. She uses this passion to share the stories of her community and to fight for all West Virginians, regardless of political party, race or socioeconomic status. She dares to be vulnerable, to lead from her heart, and to lead by example. So, it is more than a little disheartening to learn that she is being spoken about with such disrespect by another West Virginian, much less another elected official. Is that the type of conduct that will attract people to Fairmont, Marion County or West Virginia? The type of behavior exhibited by Councilmember Bledsoe is embarrassing and should not represent the beliefs, opinions, or attitudes of Fairmont or its City Council. As West Virginians we need to decide whether we are going to continue to enable that type of behavior or whether we are going to publicly condemn such conduct. I respectfully request that this letter be read openly at the Council meeting to serve as a reminder of the example that West Virginia public officials should be setting, but also as public condemnation of Councilmember Bledsoe's behavior. Social media posts can be deleted, but his words and his sentiments will not be forgotten. We must stand on the right side of this. I stand with Delegate Walker, and I urge members of the City Council to stand with her as well.

MORGANTOWN/KINGWOOD BRANCH OF THE NAACP: For hundreds of years, the connection of Black Women to transgression, sin, and barbarism has been wielded as rationale for innumerable horrors. Even before the inception of this nation, Black Woman experienced the racist idea that black skin was evident of Satanism while simultaneously, the subjugation of misogyny and patriarchy. Both served as excuses to terrorize Black Woman, and it is these dual forms of dehumanization that were directed as Delegate Danielle Walker. The Morgantown/Kingwood Branch of the NAACP emphatically condemns Councilmember Bledsoe. These racist and sexist beliefs have shaped policy, bred indifference towards the suffering of Black Woman, and resulted in exclusion - from the business world to the ballot box - of Black Women for the majority of our history. To leave the words of Councilmember Bledsoe unchallenged would be to diminish the harm the words - and the ideas that animate them - do to Black Women and the injury they cause society as a whole. It should be intolerable for an elected official to refer to another person as "satanic" and disqualifying when they refuse to accept responsibility for their actions and lack of judgment. With Fairmont ranking among the more diverse communities in the state, it should alarm all West Virginians of good conscience that such vitriol would be espoused by a representative of the people. The faith in Councilmember Bledsoe to fairly consider and advocate for the needs of all constituents has been irrevocably diminished, and the degradation has been more to his own reputation, than that of Delegate Walker. The Morgantown/Kingwood Branch of the NAACP is proud to fight for dignity and civil rights for all, and stand against unjust words, actions, and policies. It is our duty, and our honor, to name this expression of gendered racism, and insist upon accountability. The Branch calls for Councilmember Bledsoe to resign immediately.

THE MAYOR THEN READ A PREPARED STATEMENT FROM COUNCILMEMBER BLEDSOE: I am passionate about defending the lives of the innocent. I am speaking of the babies who deserve the right to breath like the rest of us. Sometimes this passion causes me to use words that are not appropriate. This will stop. However, I will

continue to passionately and publicly call out elected officials of all political parties who vote for any policy that resembles infanticide, or who try to harm the innocence of young children. I have a bad tendency to use one or two words, to replace the descriptions of the political ideas and actions that I do not like, which actually end up distracting from the real issue. This is something that I need to work on immediately. But I over reacted to Delegate Walker's pro-abortion stance, and other positions and I responded emotionally with unflattering comments. For this I apologize. So, while an elected official, I'll try to tighten up my posts in the future, do a better job of fact-checking and show more public restraint to avoid the type of distraction that my recent posts have caused. Know that my poorly worded posts were not intended to offend person or groups in any way, and I apologize for any issues that this has caused with Delegate Walker or the community. Also, please do not let my poor choice of words reflect on this Council, or the great administration of the City of Fairmont.

Mayor Mainella apologized on behalf of this Council to people who have been offended, especially Delegate Danielle Walker, by the remarks of Councilmember Bledsoe.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

No City Manager's Report was given.

CONSIDERATION OF COUNCIL BUSINESS

IN RE: SECOND READING, SET PUBLIC HEARING, AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE REFUNDING OF THE ISSUER'S OUTSTANDING WATER REFUNDING REVENUE BONDS, SERIES 2012 D AND THE FINANCING OF THE COST THEREOF, NOT OTHERWISE PROVIDED, AND PAYING COSTS OF ISSUANCE AND RELATED COSTS, THROUGH THE ISSUANCE OF WATER REFUNDING REVENUE BONDS, SERIES 2020 A OF THE CITY IN THE AGGREGATE PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF NOT MORE THAN \$14,000,000; PROVIDING FOR THE RIGHTS AND REMEDIES OF, AND THE SECURITY FOR, THE REGISTERED OWNERS OF SUCH BONDS; AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A TAX CERTIFICATE, AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT, A BOND PURCHASE AGREEMENT, A CONTINUING DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT AND OTHER DOCUMENTS; AUTHORIZING THE SALE AND PROVIDING FOR THE TERMS AND PROVISIONS OF SUCH BONDS AND ADOPTING OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING THERETO

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion and a second for the second reading of an ordinance authorizing the refunding of the Water Refunding Revenue Bonds, Series 2012 D.

Motion:

Councilmember Mason moved for the second reading of the proposed ordinance and the reading of a synopsis in lieu of the entire ordinance. Councilmember Rice seconded the motion.

The Clerk read the proposed ordinance by synopsis for the second time.

Motion:

Councilmember Mainella moved to confirm the public hearing for September 22, 2020. Councilmember Blood seconded the motion.

The Mayor declared the second reading held and the third reading and public hearing set for September 22, 2020 by voice vote of Council.

IN RE: INTRODUCTION, FIRST READING, SET PUBLIC HEARING, AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY OF FAIRMONT'S 2020-2021 ANNUAL BUDGET: GENERAL FUND

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion and second for the introduction of an ordinance providing for a General Fund Budget Revision.

Motion:

Councilmember Blood moved for the introduction of the proposed ordinance. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rice.

The Clerk read the proposed ordinance by synopsis for the first time.

The Mayor declared the public hearing set for September 8, 2020.

IN RE: INTRODUCTION, FIRST READING, SET PUBLIC HEARING, AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY OF FAIRMONT'S 2020-2021 ANNUAL BUDGET: COAL SEVERANCE

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion and second for the introduction of an ordinance providing for a Coal Severance Budget Revision.

Motion:

Councilmember Mason moved for the introduction of the proposed ordinance. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Blood.

The Clerk read the proposed ordinance by synopsis for the first time.

The Mayor declared the public hearing set for September 8, 2020.

IN RE: INTRODUCTION, FIRST READING, SET PUBLIC HEARING, AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FAIRMONT PROVIDING FOR AND AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER AND CONVEYANCE OF THOSE CERTAIN

TRACTS OF REAL ESTATE SITUATE IN THE CITY OF FAIRMONT, FAIRMONT DISTRICT, MARION COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA, TO-WIT:

MAP / PARCEL	DESCRIPTION
3 / 0291 0000 0000	2 AC 95 PS OR PCL XIV
5 / 0154 0000 0000	2 AC 79 PS OR PCL 15
2 / 0256 0000 0000	122 PS BELOW BELTLINE RR

FROM THE MARION COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TO THE CITY OF FAIRMONT AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ACCEPT A DEED OF CONVEYANCE THEREFOR AND EMPOWERING HER TO EXECUTE AND DELIVER ANY AND ALL NECESSARY TRANSACTIONAL DOCUMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF FAIRMONT AS MAY BE REQUIRED TO CONSUMMATE THE TRANSACTION

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion and second for the introduction of an ordinance providing for the transfer of property from the Marion County Chamber of Commerce to the City of Fairmont.

Motion:

Councilmember Mason moved for the introduction of the proposed ordinance. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Blood.

The Clerk read the proposed ordinance by synopsis for the first time.

The Mayor declared the public hearing set for September 8, 2020.

IN RE: INTRODUCTION, FIRST READING, SET PUBLIC HEARING, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND SUPPLEMENTING PART ONE - ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, CHAPTER ONE - GENERAL PROVISIONS, ARTICLE 107 THEREOF, CODE OF ETHICS, OF THE FAIRMONT CITY CODE, AND MORE PARTICULARLY SECTION 107.07 POLITICAL ACTIVITY THEREOF TO PROSCRIBE CERTAIN POLITICAL ACTIVITY ON CITY-OWNED PROPERTY

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion and second for the introduction of an ordinance amending the Code of Ethics to proscribe certain political activity on city-owned property.

Motion:

Councilmember Mainella moved for the introduction of the proposed ordinance. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rice.

The Clerk read the proposed ordinance by synopsis for the first time.

The Mayor declared the public hearing set for September 8, 2020.

IN RE: ADOPTION, A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FAIRMONT, WEST VIRGINIA, AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION TO THE WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS FOR A TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM GRANT FOR SIDEWALK DESIGN OR CONSTRUCTION, AND IF SUCH GRANT IS AWARDED, FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE THEREOF, AND PROVIDING THE CITY MANAGER WITH AUTHORITY TO DO ALL THINGS REASONABLE AND NECESSARY IN CONNECTION THEREWITH

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion for the adoption of a resolution authorizing the submission of a grant application to the WV Division of Highways for a sidewalk project on Locust Avenue and Country Club Road.

Motion:

Councilmember Mason moved for the adoption of the proposed ordinance. Councilmember Rice seconded the motion.

The Clerk read the proposed resolution by synopsis.

Roll call was taken by the Clerk.

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted by unanimous vote of those Councilmembers present (and by phone).

IN RE: TWO RE-APPOINTMENTS, FAIRMONT PLANNING COMMISSION, THREE-YEAR TERMS TO END SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion for two re-appointments to the Fairmont Planning Commission for three-year terms to end September 17, 2023.

Councilmember Blood moved to re-appoint Jamie Greene and Ron Straight to the Fairmont Planning Commission for three-year terms ending September 17, 2023. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mainella.

Roll call was taken by the Clerk.

The Mayor declared Jamie Greene and Ron Straight re-appointed to the Fairmont Planning Commission for three-year terms ending September 17, 2023 by unanimous vote of those Councilmember present (and by phone).

IN RE: THREE RE-APPOINTMENTS, FAIRMONT AUDIT COMMITTEE, TWO-YEAR TERMS TO END SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion for three re-appointments to the Fairmont Audit

Committee for two-year terms to end September 30, 2022.

Councilmember Rice moved to re-appoint Jamie Greene, Finance Director Priscilla Hamilton and Councilmember Barry Bledsoe to the Fairmont Audit Committee for two-year terms ending September 30, 2022. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Blood.

Roll call was taken by the Clerk.

The Mayor declared Jamie Greene, Priscilla Hamilton, and Councilmember Barry Bledsoe re-appointed to the Fairmont Audit Committee for two-year terms ending September 30, 2022 by unanimous vote of those Councilmember present (and by phone).

IN RE: ONE APPOINTMENT TO BE RECOMMENDED TO THE MARION COUNTY COMMISSION FOR THE MARION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION, UNEXPIRED TERM TO END DECEMBER 31, 2021

Mayor Merrifield entertained a motion for one recommendation to the Marion County Commission for an appointment to the MCPARC Board for an unexpired term to end December 31, 2021.

Councilmember Mainella moved to recommend Councilmember Josh Rice to the Marion County Commission for an appointment to the MCPARC Board for an unexpired term to end December 31, 2021. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Blood.

Roll call was taken by the Clerk.

The Mayor declared Councilmember Jose Rice to be recommended to the Marion County Commission for an appointment to the MCPARC Board for an unexpired term ending December 31, 2021 by unanimous vote of those Councilmember present (and by phone).

ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor entertained a motion for adjournment.

Motion:

Councilmember Mason moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rice.

The Mayor declared the meeting adjourned by voice vote of Council at 9:50 p.m.