

Board approves attorney, Taco Bell updates, concession stand rebid, park cleanup

By Katherine R. Dougan

The City of Clinton once again has an attorney representing the City with the approval at the Board of Aldermen's October 15 meeting to hire Clinton native William Purdie.

When the appointment of Purdie was first discussed at the meeting, the Board initially tabled the motion to approve the appointment by a vote of 4-2.

Alderman-at-Large Ricki Garrett said she was "concerned from the beginning about the process; the (short) length of time for the process" to make the decision for the appointment. "We were particularly concerned because the Board was not informed of the Mayor's recommendation until he announced it publicly at the meeting. In previous searches, the Board has been informed in advance of who the recommended candidate was and, in fact, the candidate was present for the meeting."

Voting with Garrett to table the appointment, Ward 2 Alderman Jim Martin said: "The City attorney position was advertised only on the City [of Clinton's] website job openings' page. While such limited advertising met the minimum legal requirements, I felt that such an important position should have been wider advertised, such as through the Mississippi Bar Association, which reaches all Mississippi attorneys."

Martin explained that only four applications for the position were received and forwarded to the Board of Aldermen for review.

"One of the four applicants withdrew from consideration, and three candidates were interviewed," Martin said.

"I understand that there were other applications or inquiries that were received after the deadline posted on the website that were not forwarded to Alderpersons," said Martin. "The Mayor chose from the three interviewed applicants and identified his recommendation at the Board meeting with no prior notice to Alderpersons. I joined in the motion

to postpone the hiring to allow for wider advertising and careful consideration."

Ward 6 Alderman Mike Cashion cautioned the Board about the extra expense to the City that delaying the hire would cause. "The going rate for an outside attorney is \$200 an hour. Where will we come up with that money?"

Although approving the appointment was initially tabled, all Aldermen present strongly agreed that the three candidates were all well qualified and highly competent. The two other Aldermen voting to table the motion were Ward 1 Alderman Dave Ellis and Ward 5 Alderman Jan Cossitt.

During the earlier portion of the meeting, Ward 3 Alderman William O. Barnett was absent.

The rules of conduct for a Board allow a Board member to revisit an issue if they change their mind about their vote. Since Martin initially voted to table the approval, he was eligible to bring the motion up for reconsideration, which he did later in the meeting. Board members then voted 6-1 to approve William Purdie as the new City attorney.

When asked why he decided to call for reconsideration of the motion to table the appointment, Martin explained: "I joined in the motion to postpone the hiring to allow for wider advertising and careful consideration. As the meeting progressed, I contemplated the time delay in re-advertising and further interviewing. I also knew that, even with the limited advertising, the three interviewed applicants were qualified candidates and that William Purdie would serve the City well as our attorney. Therefore, despite my concerns over the process, I made the motion to reconsider postponing the decision and supported the hiring of William Purdie. I am confident that William will serve the City well."

Garrett stressed "that the Board's concerns had nothing to do with the quality of the candidates, but rather with the search process. Although we had interviewed Mr. Purdie, along with three other candi-

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Clinton native Purdie named new city attorney

Special to The Clinton Courier

A resident of Clinton, William Purdie graduated from Clinton High School in 2003, and earned his bachelors of science degree in criminal justice from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2008. He earned his degree in jurisprudence, or J.D., from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 2011.

"I am excited with the addition of William [Purdie] to the City's legal department. He grew up in Clinton, was educated here, lives here, and has an understanding of the City that will be beneficial to us and the workings of the legal department," Mayor Phil Fisher said. Purdie replaces Chelsea Brannon, who resigned in September 2019 to become the city attorney for the city of Madison. Purdie's appointment as the city attorney

became official by a vote of 6-1 at the October 15 Board of Aldermen and Mayor's meeting.

"I am honored to have been appointed to serve the people of Clinton as their city attorney," Purdie stated. "I will bring the hard work and dedication to the position that it demands. I would like to thank Mayor Fisher and the Board of Aldermen for this incredible opportunity."

With eight years of law experience, Purdie has worked in multiple disci-

plines of legal affairs in both the private and public sector. He worked for the firm of Purdie and Metz, PLLC, in Ridgeland after graduation from law school.

From 2015 to 2019, Purdie served as Director of Appeals for the Mississippi Division of Medicaid, advising leadership in the areas of administrative law and compliance.

Since February, Purdie has worked as the director of Operations/Chief Counsel for David Turner Companies, a real estate ad construction firm operating in central Mississippi.

In his position as city attorney for Clinton, Purdie will serve as a legal advisor and attorney for the City as a government entity, and therefore will not represent or provide legal advice to individuals, groups or other entities.

He will advise the mayor, Board of Aldermen, department directors and city employees, and will serve as legal counsel during board meetings. He will support legislative and administrative processes involving ordinances, contracts, legal research, legal opinions and litigation; and represent the City's legal interest and defend the City's rights before all judicial, legislative and administrative tribunals.

Purdie is an active member of Calvary Baptist Church in Jackson.



William Purdie

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