



# City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center  
300 S. Church Street  
Jonesboro, AR 72401

## Meeting Minutes Nominating and Rules Committee

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Tuesday, July 16, 2019

4:45 PM

Municipal Center

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### 1. Call To Order

### 2. Roll Call by City Clerk Donna Jackson

*Mayor Harold Perrin was in attendance.*

**Present** 4 - Chris Gibson; Chris Moore; Charles Coleman and Gene Vance

**Absent** 2 - Ann Williams and Charles Frierson

### 3. Approval of minutes

[MIN-19:043](#)

MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL CALLED NOMINATING AND RULES COMMITTEE MEETING ON MAY 7, 2019

**Attachments:** [NandR Minutes 05072019.pdf](#)

**A motion was made by Councilmember Gene Vance, seconded by Councilmember Chris Moore, that this matter be Passed . The motion PASSED with the following vote.**

**Aye:** 4 - Chris Gibson; Chris Moore; Charles Coleman and Gene Vance

**Absent:** 2 - Ann Williams and Charles Frierson

[MIN-19:048](#)

MINUTES FOR THE NOMINATING & RULES COMMITTEE MEETING ON MAY 14, 2019

**Attachments:** [NandR Minutes 05142019.pdf](#)

**A motion was made by Councilmember Gene Vance, seconded by Councilmember Chris Moore, that this matter be Passed . The motion PASSED with the following vote.**

**Aye:** 4 - Chris Gibson; Chris Moore; Charles Coleman and Gene Vance

**Absent:** 2 - Ann Williams and Charles Frierson

### 4. New Business

#### *RESOLUTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED*

[RES-19:095](#)

RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS TO CREATE A UNITY COALITION ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND APPOINT

## MEMBERS TO THE COMMITTEE

*Councilmember Gene Vance said I know it's been publicized, but why don't you read those names. Do you have them? Chairmember Chris Gibson said I do not have a list. Councilmember Vance said they are listed about middle of the page in the resolution.*

*Councilmember Chris Moore said I knew most of those people, but some of them I didn't. Was there anybody on that list who actually had property on Johnson? Mayor Perrin said I don't think there was anybody on that. We met yesterday, and I know Mr. Garry Tate is still wanting to talk about this list as far as property owners on there. There was one, I think, but correct me if I'm wrong, that does have property on Johnson Avenue.*

*Mr. Garry Tate, 2300 Manchester Drive, said I didn't know if I had to wait for a motion and a second before discussion so I guess that was what I was sitting and waiting on, or do we discuss it now.*

*Councilmember Gene Vance said I make a motion to recommend this to council and asked that it be walked on tonight because this committee needs to be working immediately in order to meet the deadline. Right now, we are at least two weeks behind on this.*

*Mr. Tate said when I first seen the list, of course I had already talked to Mayor Perrin and I was expecting Ms. Emma Agnew to be on there. Of course, he appointed me. The other members he just picked from the resumes they submitted, but what has happened is that of the six people who spoke for renaming Johnson Avenue, four of those are on this committee. Of the five people who spoke in opposition of renaming Johnson Avenue, only one, which is me, is on this committee. There are two people on there who on social media, other than the ones I have mentioned, have already said that they wanted to see Johnson Avenue renamed. So, the property owners that I have talked to on Johnson Avenue feel like this committee is stacked against them. I originally thought that Johnson Avenue was off the table as far as this committee was concerned and that this committee was going to try to find some other resolution to the problem of not having something named after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. When you have an 11-member panel, and, of course, the chairman doesn't vote, unless there's a tie, and we already can count seven on that committee who are in favor of renaming Johnson Avenue. Now, if they came back with that recommendation, then the original resolution would come back to the floor for a vote. Some of the business owners and property owners are here, but there are a lot of business owners down there that are against renaming Johnson Avenue, but they own a business on Johnson Avenue and they have customers that they want to keep regardless of their race. So, they're afraid to really speak up because they're afraid of retribution. My own opinion, and I haven't asked anybody else's, but the next morning after this was brought to the City Council, originally, people from the proponents side were all over social media complaining because the council didn't vote and they felt like they weren't doing their job. There was also people from the other side who stated the same thing, but it is my opinion that the resolution should come back to the floor for a vote up or down and then the property owners, if it passes, will seek some other way to resolve it, or you can get a committee then that can try to find something else in order to name something after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We feel that this committee is stacked against us. Not intentionally, but that's the way the outcome is, and they're just not comfortable. Like I said, there's a lot of property owners down there that I have talked to that have called me and told me what their position is on it, but they're afraid to come up to this microphone and speak because they're in business there, or they live there. I'll tell you that there's a lot of people in this city who are afraid to come up here and speak about*

*a lot of things, but this committee is just not balanced. Again, I would ask that the council bring the resolution to the floor and vote it, but it's your decision from here. Either that, or send this back to Mayor Perrin to balance it out. There's a big problem with it. Thank you very much.*

*Councilmember Moore said I chaired that meeting, but Mr. Tate's comments just kind of caught me off guard. I'd like to ask City Clerk Donna Jackson if she could tell me the status of that resolution. Did we postpone temporarily the original resolution and then appoint the committee? Ms. Jackson said I gave that to Mr. Tate. Mr. Tate said it was just tabled. I asked Ms. Jackson to send me a copy of that and I re-read it and I guess I just misinterpreted it, but the renaming of Johnson Avenue was just tabled until a committee could be put together to try to reach a resolution or a compromise. Councilmember Moore said okay. Thank you, Mr. Tate. Could you tell me the actual motion, Ms. Jackson? Was it postponed temporarily or postponed indefinitely? Mr. Tate said it was tabled until September 17, 2019.*

*Councilmember Vance said I may have it here. Councilmember Moore said that might have been the motion to postpone temporarily until September 17. Mayor Perrin said that is correct and the mayor will be giving a report at each council meeting, but you're right, it was tabled until September 17. I believe that's right. The resolution that we're talking about tonight states that the City Council authorizes a Unity Coalition Advisory Committee to study the possible designation of a memorial highway or a suitable and acceptable alternative named in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*Mr. Tate said I was told that this committee had four options and those were to do nothing, to rename Johnson Avenue, to find a suitable memorial road, or the eastern bypass from Pacific to Farville, and, again, with already eight members on that committee that we feel like are in favor of renaming Johnson Avenue, the property owners asked me to speak again tonight because they are not comfortable with the makeup of this committee, and they said that they, and the other side did, too, wanted the resolution voted up or down. They were complaining the next day on social media because the council didn't vote. I don't know where we go from here because I know that changing the committee members is going to upset some of those, but when you look at the numbers, we don't feel like we have a chance when it comes to Johnson Avenue.*

*Councilmember Vance said the motion was to table RES-19:072 until the September 17 council meeting with the recommendations that the Mayor, with all due haste, will appoint a committee to bring back a recommendation on or before September 17, 2019, on a solution for the situation of Jonesboro not having a street named after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and that the committee studies all possibilities of the designation of a memorial highway or suitable and acceptable alternative naming opportunity. It did not limit it to Johnson Avenue, a bypass or anywhere. It said any suitable and acceptable alternative.*

*Mr. Tate said the thing was to table Johnson Avenue and it said to reach some suitable alternative. I took that to be as an alternative to the resolution of renaming Johnson Avenue. Councilmember Vance said that wasn't the intent. That wasn't the intent of what I said. The intent of what I said didn't take anything off the table. However, it did say a suitable and acceptable alternative. That didn't mean that Johnson Avenue was off the table.*

*Mr. Tate said that's when I found out yesterday that Johnson Avenue was not off the table because when I read suitable alternative in the first part of the motion was to*

table that resolution and then it said a suitable alternative. When I read that, that told me that Johnson Avenue was off the table and we were going to find something else. Then I found out yesterday that renaming Johnson Avenue is still a part of it and that's what bothers me whenever we feel like that this committee has seven to eight members who are for renaming Johnson Avenue. Of course, I realize also that whatever recommendation this committee makes, the council doesn't have to approve it that way.

Councilmember Vance said that would be my thoughts if it turns out in fact that the committee does not use proper studying of the situation and taking everybody and everywhere into consideration. I would think that the council would take that into consideration.

Mr. Tate said of course, sometimes committees have the tendency to be able to influence the vote because they work on something and try to come back with something. If you look at the polls that the television station and NEA Report have done, one of them has 8,100 votes on it and the vote is 86% to 14% to leave Johnson Avenue alone. The other one has over 6,500 votes and it's 80% to 19%. I served eight years on the City Council. Whenever I sat there and voted, I did not vote on some things because when I walked into the council chambers I was not there to represent myself. I was there to represent the majority and the best thing for the City of Jonesboro. Of course, I was in business and I had done a lot of work for the City of Jonesboro over the years. I never submitted bids for a single city job the full-time I was in business and never asked to. I just feel like this thing was rushed through. The people along Johnson Avenue had a day and a half notice to try to prepare for the Public Works meeting, and then we had a couple of weeks to finally get everything together, but, again, in meeting and talking to property owners down there, everyone I talk to was absolutely against renaming Johnson Avenue, but they didn't want to come up here and say it and they didn't want their names mentioned because they still have to be in business there regardless of how the vote would go. I know this is for the committee and with that being said, and with Johnson Avenue still on the table, we feel that this committee is stacked 7 to 4, to 8 to 3.

Chairmember Chris Gibson said just looking over these names that are on the committee and knowing many of them in some capacity, and I'm going to respectfully disagree just briefly because I feel that most of these have a very open mind and would be open for discussion.

Mr. Tate said I don't know how you can come up here and absolutely speak for something and if there had been four speaking for it on the committee and four speaking against it on the committee and the rest of them just at random, then I don't think anybody there would be having a problem, but when they read the names and you compare it to the six people who got to speak and four of those are on the committee. Of course, the sponsor, Dr. Charles Coleman is on there, but again as chairman. I think the world of Dr. Coleman. He and I have been friends for a long time and when this is all over, he and I are still going to be friends a lot longer. Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said let me ask you a question. Have you spoke to any of these members on the list and asked them how they would vote? Did you know who was on the list and who wasn't on the list? Mr. Tate said have I spoke to any of them on the list. Absolutely not. No sir, I haven't. Councilmember Dr. Coleman said I guess it's kind of hard for me to read that you know how they are going to vote if you haven't even spoke to anybody. I mean, even me. As far as being chair, my duty is to oversee not to influence in any kind of way regardless. Mr. Tate said I realize that, as chairman. Again, I'm here speaking for these people who called me and I'm stating

*their opinion as to what the committee make up is and also mine. Of course, you all can vote to send it to full council. That's what this meeting is all about. Again, it may not be, but it feels like if you look at the people that spoke against it and people who spoke for it that are on that committee, it's four from one side and me from the other. Chairmember Gibson said okay. Point well taken, but in interest of time, we've got a young woman who would like to speak.*

*Councilmember Moore said let me ask Mayor Perrin a question right quick while she's coming to the podium. Did a property owner on Johnson Avenue apply? Mayor Perrin said one property owner applied. Councilmember Moore asked if he refused to be on the committee. Mayor Perrin said no, because, again, when we looked at the list, we just looked at a lot of things not only having property on Johnson Avenue, but we're trying to look at all alternatives we possibly can, but only one applied. There were 32 people who applied. We started off with nine and we increased the committee to 11 because there were a lot of good qualifications. It's difficult to come down to 10 or 11 when you have so many coming through there. It's going to be no different than with this committee on the sales tax. You have a lot of people who are going to apply for that. To come down to one person to try to make that decision and helping my administration to help me do that to pull backgrounds, etc. It really is difficult. I understand what Mr. Tate is stating and I, also, served with Mr. Tate the whole eight years. I think I served with him the whole eight years.*

*Ms. Sandra Combs, 2121 Bristol Drive, said I have lived here for 11 years. I was selected to be on the committee. I submitted by the deadline the application and resume as requested by the Mayor as stated and published in the newspaper. I, also, sent in a paper copy of my application. I believe that I can be fair, even though I loved Dr. King, and I was alive while he was still here. I think Jonesboro should have a street, but I am not biased enough to say it's Johnson Avenue or nothing. I have received, in the last week, some information from the Mayor's office and his spokesperson about the parameters that we will work under and I pledge to work under those parameters. I do not own a business on Johnson Avenue. I do business on Johnson Avenue, and I am willing to be fair and I believe that is why I was one of the 11 selected. I thank you for this opportunity. Chairmember Gibson said thank you.*

*Mr. Roger Watkins, 2701 Glenwood, said I have lived one house off Johnson Avenue for many years. Back some 50 years ago, I met Ms. Sylvia Harris. She lived at 507 E. Johnson Avenue. We dated for five years. We own 507 E. Johnson Avenue, and we own 509 E. Johnson Avenue, now. Isn't there an eastern bypass that does not have a name at all? Would that be correct? Is there not an eastern bypass that does not have a street name? Councilmember Vance said there are several places in town that would be acceptable choices and that's why we tried to put it to a committee because to look at 15 different options in this setting is not the proper way to do it. I may be wrong, but I thought the committee was a great idea and should be looking at it in an intelligent manner that will come to an agreement that should make the majority happy. It's not going to make everybody happy. Nothing will make everybody happy, and that is one of the options. Chairmember Gibson said this meeting is about appointing a committee. It's not about renaming Johnson Avenue at all, so we need to try to focus on that aspect of this conversation. Mr. Watkins said I'd like to say one other thing. If this does come before the council and if the council were to vote to rename Johnson Avenue, I feel that there would be a referendum to try to overturn that. Thank you all for your time.*

*Mr. Andy Adair, 1123 E. Johnson Avenue, said I think this unity committee and nowhere in there did I see that it had anything to do with Johnson Avenue. It was just*

to find a suitable location or suitable alternative. Like I said, I've walked up and down Johnson and talked to residents and business owners, and overwhelmingly, people do not want to change the name of Johnson Avenue. I would say that of the names I have on my petition, maybe five to seven people didn't want to sign it. I told people that if they didn't want to sign it then I didn't want them to sign it. I told them that I wanted them to want for Johnson to stay Johnson Avenue. Even two or three of those people called me later on and said they had done a little research and found out a little more about the topic and they wanted to sign my petition. I think if I knew Johnson Avenue was still on the table and still an option, and I was told two out of four of the options that were on the table, then you would have gotten more business owners to sign up for this committee. I just didn't get the feeling that's what this was for. Thank you.

Councilmember Dr. Coleman said for a while I had decided not to do this, but I actually went up and down Johnson Avenue myself just to seek the information about all of these people against renaming Johnson Avenue, and I found a whole lot of people on Johnson Avenue that had not even attempted to sign that petition, at all. I don't know if that's just hypocrisy or somebody just making up statements. What they tell me, even as I asked them about me being chair, one of the things they said was that they felt I would be fair as the chair. I said, well, it's a fact that I cannot even vote, but for somebody on Johnson Avenue to tell me opposite what I'm hearing, that's kind of eerie to me. It would be very unprofessional to call out people's names. I just wanted to make sure that people understand that I did go out to Johnson Avenue myself to actually seek to find out who was signing and who was not signing the petition. I just want to make sure that is clear.

Mr. Tate said first of all, Dr. Coleman, I think you're absolutely probably one of the fairest persons I have ever met. I have known you a long time. I've always thought highly of you. I think highly of your opinions, and I always will. I just want you to know that. Again, whenever you read the resolution to table and if you read the words, it says, and Mr. Adair and I both assumed Johnson Avenue was off the table and the committee was going to try to find a suitable alternative. That's one reason Mr. Adair didn't sign up to be on the committee because he said he didn't think he needed to be picking any street names, and, so, he didn't submit one. If you read the words of the resolution to table and asking for a committee, it says, well, just read the words. I guarantee the interpretation that I got from it was the same interpretation a lot of people got from it. Again, we're not here to talk about the naming of any street or any building or anything. We're here to discuss the committee and we just wanted the committee to know that based on the names that are there, they feel like, and after finding out that I misinterpreted the tabling, that the commission is stacked against us. I have an open mind just like the woman said she does. I've always been open-minded, but I've also spoke when I feel in my heart about something, and I'm not comfortable with the committee as it is because we feel like we're outnumbered.

Councilmember Vance said I'd like to say one thing and then we need to vote because it's time for another committee meeting. An attorney didn't write the motion. A country boy from Sedgwick wrote that motion and it could have had a word that didn't belong or a word could have been misplaced, but the intent was to put Jonesboro into the mix to find some place that we could name MLK. Again, I apologize for not getting an attorney to write it.

Chairmember Gibson said I think Mr. Tate just made a very valid point to this committee. I think that we are tasking everyone to go into this with an open mind and I don't think they would have been selected had they not had that ability.

**A motion was made by Councilmember Gene Vance, seconded by**

**Councilmember Chris Moore, that this matter be Recommended to Council .  
The motion PASSED with the following vote.**

**Aye:** 4 - Chris Gibson;Chris Moore;Charles Coleman and Gene Vance

**Absent:** 2 - Ann Williams and Charles Frierson

#### **5. Pending Items**

#### **6. Other Business**

#### **7. Public Comments**

*Ms. Patti Lack, 4108 Forest Hill Road, said I asked Dr. Coleman if the public would be able to attend the meetings that they have when they're talking about this issue. Chairmember Gibson said all the meetings we have are public. Ms. Lack said so the public will be allowed to come. Chairmember Gibson asked Ms. Jackson if those meetings would be published just like any other meeting. Ms. Jackson said yes. Councilmember Dr. Coleman said yes. It will be Ms. Lack.*

#### **8. Adjournment**

**A motion was made by Councilmember Gene Vance, seconded by Councilmember Chris Moore, that this meeting be Adjourned . The motion PASSED with the following vote.**

**Aye:** 4 - Chris Gibson;Chris Moore;Charles Coleman and Gene Vance

**Absent:** 2 - Ann Williams and Charles Frierson