

needed, they received rides to the Salvation Army for a place to stay overnight. When JET buses weren't available, Jonesboro PD stepped up to help.

Speaking of dedicated employees, I want to acknowledge and congratulate a coworker who retired yesterday after 41 years of service. That's what I thought. Steve Kent. We want to wish Steve wonderful years in his retirement, 41 years in that office in Finance. That's quite a commitment to our city. So, thank you, Steve, and I'll miss seeing all your work every day.

On January 19th, I was honored to speak at the Martin Luther King Day ceremony on ASU campus, which was preceded by a parade. Now we're into February and observing Black History Month. I'd be remiss if I didn't say I look forward to the day soon. I hope when the E. Boone Watson Center is fully open. The center is a historical hub for recognizing important contributions and breakthroughs in the African American history in Jonesboro.

You may have seen, in the news recently, that \$3.5 million in federal appropriations were signed into law by the President. Now, that comes to the City of Jonesboro, to the E-911 Real Time Crime Center needs. It's been a long wait, but we're very excited. I want to thank our senator, John Boozeman, for his tenacity and diligence, in seeing this funding through as well as Congressman Crawford and Senator Cotton.

I want to close with some wonderful news, and I'll move forward because I have further comments. Today, from the Jonesboro Unlimited and Chamber of Commerce. InnvoAsian Cuisine Enterprise, Incorporated, will build a state of the art, frozen food manufacturing facility in Jonesboro, Arkansas. This is a major development. It will create approximately 200 jobs strengthening the region's position as a vibrant hub for food manufacturing. The foods will be found in grocery freezer aisles nationwide, making it easy to bring family, favorite Asian dishes to the table, with restaurant inspired flavors. The company says the new facility will significantly increase production capacity for its high growth, multi-serve entree line, supporting the company's continued growth in the U.S. market. President and CEO, Joe Kent, says the new Jonesboro facility will allow the company to meet growing demand for high quality cuisine while creating meaningful jobs in our community. The facility will be about 175,000 square feet located in Craighead Technology Park. I was very pleased and honored to be a part of the conversation early on, and the commitment of Jonesboro is very important on the reason why they're here. After the competitive multi-state search, citing speed to the market, a skilled workforce, and a strong local and state supporters, were key factors. Governor Sanders commented that Arkansas was proud to be a state where farm products are turned into value added food and tables across the United States, and that's something we all believe in.

So, I'm bringing my comments to a close. Council and the City of Jonesboro, I'm here before you tonight, to make comments. In two weeks ago, binders were presented at the last meeting, and they warrant review. Several people have mentioned they'd like to hear my side. Which I interpret to mean, they would like to know more of the facts involving City Stars. So, I've spent some time confirming facts that dispel some of the misperceptions and misunderstandings. The Jonesboro City Stars Booster Club was organized as a private, nonprofit organization, and registered with the Arkansas Secretary of State in December of 2001. Organized as an independent entity, it had its own members, and finances, and was led by a city employee. City Parks Director, Jason Wilkie, was the original registered agent. Look it up. The original agreement between the City of Jonesboro and City Stars Booster Club was approved by City Council in 2004. That contract established mutual agreements, including, including the goal of providing athletics at no cost for Jonesboro youth. And working together to do so. It also outlined the use and maintenance of city parks and fields, among other

things, such as a declaration that the City Stars Booster Club shall operate its own concession stand. And all revenues generated from such use shall belong to and be for the sole and exclusive use of the City Stars. From the very start, their revenue was their money, their business, not the cities. Look it up. In the spring in 2025, members of the Arkansas Revolution Football Club, a subsidiary, nonprofit, organization of City Stars, organized for the Revolution travel teams met with me and proposed a creation of a new private entity to oversee all youth soccer in Jonesboro. Despite maintaining independence from city control and oversight, the proposal sought public funding of \$500,000 annually, which would have covered \$190,000 in non-coach payroll and another \$125,000 for coaches. The proposal is FOIAble from the city. Look it up. Shortly after that meeting, Matt Daniels resigned. In his resignation letter, he stated, in his incorrect beliefs, that, one, the city controlled the City Stars budget. It did not. And two, the city was already spending a large portion of the \$500,000 in the proposal he and others made to me. The city was spending zero. Look it up. In April 2025, the entire board of the Arkansas Revolution Football Club issued a joint resignation letter. And stated, they're incorrect understanding that the City of Jonesboro has city employees to run various programs under the City Stars umbrella. The Arkansas Revolution Football Club Board said they presented City Stars financial statements to my office, requesting clarification and account separation, and said to their knowledge, that my office declined to take any action. Fiduciary duties fall to the boards and management of private, nonprofit organizations, and cannot be delegated. Giving them full and exclusive authority over their own money, and how it is handled, and how their chart of accounts is organized, and how their accounting entries are made. Look it up. I did ask the management of City Stars to voluntarily undergo and pay for an audit by a respected, certified, public accounting firm. They agreed. And the firm of Thomas, Speight, and Noble completed its audit of City Stars finances and presented their report to the City Star's board of directors in June of 2025. The independent auditors report expressed the opinion that the City Star's financial statements present fairly in all material, respects, and assets, liabilities, net assets of the City's Stars Booster Club. In other words, clean audit. This report was also presented to this City Council. Incidentally, Thomas, Speight, and Noble also conduct the annual audits for the Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission. Look it up. To put it plainly, it was not Mayor Brodell's business how City Stars manage their money, nor Mayor Forman's, nor Mayor Perrin's, nor mine. No matter how much parents or Revolution board members might have assumed, hoped, or wished it was. Criticisms of me or the City Council regarding City Stars management are misplaced. My responsibility, as Mayor, is to administer city operated programs, which City Stars was not. In accordance with City Council approved budgets, which we don't include City Stars. I presented verifiable facts, not feelings, not understandings or beliefs like many of the documents presented at the previous City Council meeting contained. I understand some people may have honest questions about City Stars operations and funds in the past. Those questions should be properly directed to its own officers and board of directors, which had the full fiduciary responsibilities and duties. Part of all the confusion has come from people asking questions, or emailing, or texting complaints, and concerns about City Stars to the wrong place. The Mayor's Office did not have answers about the accounting or handling of money of City Stars. And I never meant for it to come off as dismissive because we didn't have the answers. We don't have answers for Jonesboro Baseball Boosters, Arkansas Junior Volleyball, or the Foundation of Arts. And even though, like they, like City Stars, and many other private non-profits, they utilize city owned facilities. So let's remember, the reason, and I haven't forgotten, that City Stars was formed in the first place. It was to help kids who didn't have access to and couldn't afford other athletic program options. And it's done very well for 25 years. Tens of thousands of children have benefited as the city and City Stars work together. This should be an exciting time. For that program and the upcoming generations and our youth need it. Moving forward means moving beyond the past.

And now we need to focus. Because we have now transitioned City Stars, as December 5th, to a city program. And we are working with various groups, boards, council, on how to achieve the best process we can go about that. Folks, we have a good model in place with the city softball program. Which, for instance, has done an exceptional job managing cash transactions common to sports clubs. So I conclude. I have great confidence. I do. That a year from now, all sports, that all youth sports numbers and processes will show continued improvement. Now, Council and community, my love and passion is for the youth in this community. It always has been and that won't change. I won't change my integrity and I won't lie. This is the commitment that I have said and I will continue to have for this community as your Mayor. I want to say thank you for the opportunity to stand before you this evening and give what I feel is important and they are facts. That's all I have to say this evening on the matter. Thank you.

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Councilmember Chris Moore said, Madam Clerk, I'd make a motion that we move agenda item 10, public comment, to be placed before agenda item number 9, council comments on tonight's agenda, and that I be placed last on the council comments. Councilmember Chris Gibson said, second. Mayor Copenhaver asked for that motion to be repeated. Councilmember Chris Moore said, I'll make a motion to move agenda item 10, also known as public comment, to be placed before agenda item 9, also known as council comments on tonight's council agenda, and that I be placed last under council comments. Mayor Copenhaver asked for a roll call vote. The vote was as follows: Street – Aye; Miller – Aye; Bryant – Aye; Hafner – Aye; A. Coleman – Aye; McClain – Aye; Gibson – Aye; Williams – Aye; Moore – Aye; C. Coleman – Aye; Emison – Aye; Porter – Aye. All voted aye to move item 10, Public Comments before item 9, City Council Reports.

My name is Bill Campbell. My address is 463 West Matthews. Come by sometime. My old friends. I felt because of this situation in 10 years of working with two mayors, that I could address what it's like for these people to be the victim of rumors. And I know that we've got an actual investigation, a federal investigation going on. But, you don't interfere. You don't jump to conclusions with a federal investigation. You let it play out and find out what if anyone, is responsible, you know, and I think you'll have plenty of time to know that. Now, I also know that you guys have to deal with your people in your wards and people across the city, and you hear things, you go out, and you hear people with ideas. I can tell you there's some coffee shops where a lot of people try to impress one another about how much better they could run the city than the directors and the teams that do that. One of the first things that I was given when I came here in 2016 was to review City Stars, not because I have... just as a favor to the previous mayor, and I don't have any accounting background. But I talked to Wixon Huffstetler in the last week because he managed this program before Danny Kapales, and he said this was exactly what he got. It operates the very same way that it did with him. I have talked with Mayor Perrin about it, and he says, this is the way that he knew it to run. I think it may have been set up with some flaws, but I can also tell you how difficult it is when you've got a three or four person management team trying to keep all these things under control. You know, when you've got 20 something departments, and you've got people calling, and some people repetitively, and there is a factor that in Little Rock, they call it the STPs, the same ten people who will wear you out with emails, calls, texts. You know some of them. And I'm not saying they're wrong. They have the right to be a part of the city, but they also have a moral duty to tell the truth. You know, I want you guys to make sure that you have the patience to find the truth because you're not going to get it in a place where we already know it's being investigated by a federal agency. And that's my only observation as somebody who... We heard so many things. You'd hear so