FILED
FEB 14 2025
EDDIE JEAN CARR, CHANCERY CLERK
BY Gann D.C

IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF HINDS COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

CITY OF CLARKSDALE **PETITIONER**

VS. **CAUSE NO.:** G2025-152 m/4

DELTA PRESS PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC. D/B/A/ THE CLARKSDALE PRESS REGISTER, EMMERICH NEWSPAPERS, INC., AND FLOYD INGRAM, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS PUBLISHER OF THE CLARKSDALE PRESS REGISTER **RESPONDENTS**

PETITION

COMES NOW, the City of Clarksdale (the "Clarksdale"), through its duly elected Board of Mayor and Commissioners (the "Board"), and files this Petition against Delta Press Publishing Company, Inc. d/b/a The Clarksdale Press Register, Emmerich Newspapers, Inc., Clarksdale Press Register (collectively "CPR"), and Floyd Ingram, the editor and publisher of the Clarksdale Press Register newspaper (the "newspaper), and in support thereof would show unto the Court, as follows:

1. Clarksdale is a municipal corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Mississippi and domiciled in Coahoma County, Mississippi.

2. CPR is a Mississippi corporation whose principal office is located at 246 Briarwood Drive, Suite 101, Jackson, MS 39206 whose registered agent is John Wyatt Emmerich located at the principal office of CPR or PO Box 16709, Jackson, MS 39236. Mr. Ingram is an adult resident citizen whose business address is at 128 East Second Avenue, Clarksdale, Coahoma County, Mississippi, an employee of CPR who is the editor and publisher of the Clarksdale Press Register newspaper owned by CPR in Clarksdale.

3. This Court has jurisdiction over the parties and subject matter pursuant to MISS. CODE

ANN. § 9-5-81 (Rev. 2002) and pursuant to Article 6 § 159 of the Mississippi Constitution of 1890.

4. Venue is proper with this Court as the subject matter complained of is online, in circulation throughout the state, and the principal harm complained of occurs within the boundaries of Hinds County.

5. On Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at noon, the Board held a duly noticed special-called meeting to discuss and pass a Resolution supporting local and private tax legislation before the deadline to submit proposed local and private bills to the Mississippi State Legislature.

6. The City Clerk, Laketha Covington, created the notice for the meeting and forgot to e-mail a copy of the notice to Mr. Ingram as she customarily does. (A copy of the City Clerk's Affidavit is attached hereto as Exhibit "A".)

7. The special-called meeting of the Board on February 4, 2025 was properly noticed by law, the doors to the meeting were open, and the meeting was streamed live online to the public through Mayor Chuck Espy's public Facebook page.

8. On Tuesday, February 4, 2025, between 2:13 p.m. and 2:17 p.m., Mr. Ingram came to the City Clerk's office and picked up the special meeting's Notice, Agenda, the Resolution, and the proposed local and private legislation from the Clerk at no cost and without need of making a public record request. During that time the City Clerk apologized or admitted that it was her fault that Mr. Ingram did not get the usual courtesy e-mail notifying him of the special-called meeting. Mr. Ingram also did not further inquire as to why he did not receive a notice before the meeting. Mr. Ingram further gave no indications or assertions to the City Clerk he believed any intended deception was afoot or notice to him was purposefully restricted. (A copy of the Notice, Agenda, the Resolution, and the proposed legislation is attached hereto collectively as Exhibit "B".)

9. On Thursday, February 6, 2025 and at 3:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 8, 2025, Mr.

Ingram respectively published in the newspaper and posted as free content to online properties owned by CPR an article with the title "EDITORIAL: SECRECY, DECEPTION ERODE PUBLIC TRUST." In the article Mr. Ingram stated Clarksdale failed "to go to the public with details" about the idea of the proposed legislation. Within the context of his title, Mr. Ingram also strongly stated or implied the reason he did not receive notice to the February 4, 2025 meeting was because the Board and its members received "kick-back," "just want a few nights in Jackson to lobby for this idea - at public expense," give "away candy at Halloween, toy giveaways at Christmas and hosting events where politicians can hand out goody bags to voters," and made the community "suspicious." His statements could be reasonably understood as declaring or implying that the "deceptive" reason he was not given notice of the meeting is provable through someone in the community willing to reveal promises made by Board members in exchange for votes or in the process of time. (A copy of the print and online articles (the "libelous editorial") is attached hereto as Exhibit "C".)

10. The efforts of the Mayor of Clarksdale to lobby for and push the proposed local and private legislation by meeting with legislators in Jackson, MS have been chilled and hindered due to the libelous assertions and statements by Mr. Ingram which are currently in the circulation newspaper and published to the online properties of CPR.

11. Also published in the February 6, 2025 edition of the newspaper, and merely an hour before the libelous editorial was published online, Mr. Ingram published a free article online reporting on the February 4, 2025 meeting of the Board without the libelous statements. (A copy of the prior article is attached hereto as Exhibit "D".)

12. Clarksdale and the Board verily believe that immediate and irreparable injury, loss or damage will result to Clarksdale, the Board and its members, and the public if the libelous editorial is allowed to be accessed, and an injunction would be without harm to the respondents and consistent with public interest.

WHEREFORE PREMISES CONSIDERED, Clarksdale prays as follows:

1. That this Court issue a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction preventing CPR, Mr. Ingram, and their assigns, agents, and employees from continuing to make the article available to the public or paying clients on their online properties, personal pages, and/or print publications.

2. That after a hearing on this matter, this Court declare the libelous editorial as libelous and enjoin CPR, Mr. Ingram, and their assigns, agents, and employees from republishing the libelous editorial, recall any newspapers with the libelous article possible , and warn against future libelous statements.

3. That this Court grant any other such relief, up to and including monetary damages, attorney's fees, and the cost of litigation, it deems appropriate based on the Premises.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED, on this the 14th day of February, 2025.

CITY OF CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI

BY: _____
CHUCK ESPY
Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
LAKETHA COVINGTON
City Clerk

_____
MELVIN D. MILLER, II, MSB#103835
121 Sunflower Avenue
Post Office Box 940
Clarksdale, Mississippi 38614
Telephone No. (662) 621-8137
Facsimile No. (662) 621-8197
melvindmillerlaw@gmail.com
Attorney for the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
COUNTY OF COAHOMA

THIS DAY personally appeared before me, the undersigned authority within and for the State and County aforesaid, the within named CHUCK ESPY, personally known by me to be the Mayor of the CITY OF CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI, who being by me first duly sworn, states upon his oath that all of the facts, matters and allegations contained in the above and foregoing Petition are true and correct as therein stated except those statements made on information and belief, which he verily believes to be true, and being first duly authorized so to do by Order duly adopted by the Board of Mayor and Commissioners of the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi on February 13, 2025.

GIVEN under my hand and official seal on this, the 14th day of February, 2025.

NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission Expires/Seal:

02/15/2027

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
LORETHA COVINGTON
NOTARY
PUBLIC
COAHOMA COUNTY
Commission expires February 15, 2027
Commission number 347088

IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF HINDS COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

CITY OF CLARKSDALE PETITIONER

VS. CAUSE NO. _____

DELTA PRESS PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC .D/B/A/ THE CLARKSDALE PRESS REGISTER, EMMERICH NEWSPAPERS, INC., AND FLOYD INGRAM, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS PUBLISHER OF THE CLARKSDALE PRESS REGISTER RESPONDENTS

AFFIDAVIT OF LAKETHA COVINGTON

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
COUNTY OF COAHOMA

1. My name is Laketha Covington and I am the duly appointed and acting City Clerk for the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi. I am over the age of 21, have personal knowledge of the matters set forth herein, and I am competent to give testimony.

2. On Tuesday, February 4, 2025, I posted Notice of Special Meeting at approximately 8:00 a.m. on the door to City Hall at 121 Sunflower Avenue, Clarksdale, Mississippi for a meeting of the Board of Mayor and Commissioners of Clarksdale to be held at noon the same day.

3. As City Clerk for the City of Clarksdale, I customarily e-mail the media any Notice of Special Meeting around the same time I post it on the door of City Hal, however, I inadvertently failed to do so on Tuesday, February 4, 2025.

4. After the special meeting between 2:13 p.m. and 2:17 p.m. on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, Mr. Floyd Ingram, of the Clarksdale Press Register, came to my office and inquired about

Exhibit "A"

the subject matter of the February 4, 2025 special meeting.

5. I observed that Mr. Ingram had something to write with and a notepad, but I told him that I would print all the documents for him and proceeded to do so without asking him to fill out a Record Request Form and without asking him to pay for the cost of printing.

6. I apologized for neglecting to send him the Notice of Special Meeting as I usually would have done and stated how busy I have been due to the upcoming elections.

7. I gave him a copy of the February 4, 2025 Notice of Special Meeting, the agenda of that meeting, the Resolution that was passed during that meeting, and the local and private legislation that was the subject of the Resolution.

8. Mr. Ingram expressed gratitude to me and I observed that he was smiling as he left.

FURTHER, AFFIANT SAYETH NAUGHT.

This the 13th day of February, 2025.

LAKETHA COVINGTON

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
COUNTY OF COAHOMA

Personally appeared before me, the undersigned authority, in and for the county aforesaid, the within named LAKETHA COVINGTON, who being first duly sworn, stated under oath that she signed and executed the above and foregoing AFFIDAVIT on the date therein stated and for the intents and purposes therein expressed.

SWORN TO SUBSCRIBED BEFORE ME, this the 13 day of February, 2025.

NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission Expires/Seal:

11/12/28

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI NOTARY PUBLIC ID#98735 LISA C. FISHER Commission Expires Nov 12, 2028 COAHOMA COUNTY

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

THE UNDERSIGNED CHUCK ESPY, the duly elected and qualified Mayor of the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi, does hereby, by this written notice, call a special meeting of the Board of Mayor and Commissioners of the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi, for the transaction of important and urgent business, to-wit:

1. Discuss and approve Resolution proposing and endorsing local and private legislation to levy additional tax on certain retailers within the City of Clarksdale

Said special meeting shall be held at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 04, 2025 at, City Hall, Council Chambers, 121 Sunflower Avenue Clarksdale, Mississippi, 38614. This Notice, with the endorsements of its service, shall be entered upon the official minutes of the special meeting. No business not specified in this Notice shall be conducted or transacted at said meeting.

The City Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to post this Notice of Special Meeting in a public place near the front door of City Hall and to give appropriate notice thereof to the media, and to comply with all of the requirements of Miss Code Ann Section 25-41-13 (Rev. 2018), including posting the Notice of Special Meeting within one (1) hour after the special meeting is called in a prominent place in City Hall available for examination and inspection by members of the general public.

This, the 4th day of February, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.

CHUCK ESPY
Mayor

POSTED AT CITY HALL, 121 Sunflower Avenue, near main front door, on this the 4th day of February 2025 at 8:00 a.m.

LAKETHA COVINGTON
City Clerk

Exhibit "B"

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

THE UNDERSIGNED CHUCK ESPY, the duly elected and qualified Mayor of the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi, does hereby, by this written notice, call a special meeting of the Board of Mayor and Commissioners of the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi, for the transaction of important and urgent business, to-wit:

1. Discuss and approve Resolution proposing and endorsing local and private legislation to levy additional tax on certain retailers within the City of Clarksdale

Said special meeting shall be held at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 04, 2025 at, City Hall, Council Chambers, 121 Sunflower Avenue Clarksdale, Mississippi, 38614. This Notice, with the endorsements of its service, shall be entered upon the official minutes of the special meeting. No business not specified in this Notice shall be conducted or transacted at said meeting.

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This, the 4th day of February, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.

CHUCK ESPY
Mayor

POSTED AT CITY HALL, 121 Sunflower Avenue, near main front door, on this the 4th day of February 2025 at 8:00a.m.

LAKETHA COVINGTON
City Clerk

CERTIFICATE

I, the undersigned, did on this day, personally serve a true and correct copy of the above and foregoing Notice of Special Meeting of the Board of Mayor and Commissioners called for 12:00 p.m. on February 04, 2025 at 11:55 a.m.

Name: Laketha Covington
Title: City Clerk

Commissioner Signature

BOARD AGENDA
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025
12:00 PM

BOARD MEMBERS:

MAYOR	**CHUCK ESPY**
COMMISSIONERS	**BO PLUNK**
	JIMMY HARRIS
	WILLIE TURNER, JR.
	EDWARD SEALS

DEPARTMENT HEADS	**CITY CLERK**	**LAKETHA COVINGTON**
	POLICE CHIEF	**VINCENT RAMIREZ**
	FIRE CHIEF	**CHARLES LANE**
	PUBLIC WORKS	**CRAIG AMERSON**
	CITY ATTORNEY	**MELVIN MILLER**

PH Discuss and approve Resolution proposing and endorsing local and private legislation to levy additional tax on certain retailers within the City of Clarksdale

HT **ADJOURN** 12:04 pm
Thursday, February 06, 2025 at 12 p.m.

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI DECLARING ITS SUPPORT OF LOCAL AND PRIVATE LEGISLATION ALLOWING THE CITY TO LEVY SALES TAX UPON THE GROSS PROCEEDS OF SALES AT CERTAIN BUSINESSES IN THE CITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING FUNDS TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE PUBLIC SAFETY, CRIME PREVENTION, AND CONTINUING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE CITY; TO REQUIRE THAT AN ELECTION BE HELD ON THE QUESTION OF THE IMPOSITION OF SUCH TAX; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, the Board of Mayor and Commissioners (the "**Governing Body**"), acting for and on behalf of the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi (the "**City**"), hereby finds, determines, adjudicates and declares as follows:

1. Governing Body has determined the necessity to approve a referendum to go before the qualified electors of the City to impose a tax at a rate not to exceed two percent (2%) of the gross proceeds of retailers whose main purpose of business is to sell alcoholic beverage, hemp, marijuana, or tobacco to consumers.

2. Qualified electors will be allowed to decide whether to vote "FOR THE TAX" and, on a separate line, "AGAINST THE TAX" and the voters shall vote by placing a cross (X) or check (√) opposite their choice on the proposition.

3. When the results of the election shall have been canvassed and certified, the City may levy the tax if sixty percent (60%) of the qualified electors who vote in the election vote in favor of the tax.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY, ACTING FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE CITY, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Governing Body hereby requests that the Mississippi Legislature enact local and private legislation authorizing the City to call for a referendum to go before the qualified electors of the city voting in the election to decide whether to vote "FOR THE TAX" andor on a separate line, vote "AGAINST THE TAX".

SECTION 2. This resolution shall become effective immediately and all resolutions and orders, or parts thereof, in conflict herewith are, to the extent of such conflict, repealed.

[*The Remainder Left Intentionally Blank*]

Commissioner Plunk made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Harris, to adopt the foregoing resolution, and the question being put to a roll call vote, the result was as follows:

Commissioner Bo Plunk	voted: Aye
Commissioner Jimmy Harris	voted: Aye
Commissioner Willie Turner, Jr.	voted: Aye
Commissioner Ed Seals	voted: Aye

The motion having received the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Governing Body present, being a quorum of said Governing Body, the Mayor declared the motion carried and the resolution adopted this 4th day of February, 2025.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk

LOCAL AND PRIVATE LEGISLATION

BILL NO. ____

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI TO LEVY SALES TAX UPON THE GROSS PROCEEDS OF SALES AT CERTAIN BUSINESSES IN THE CITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING FUNDS TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE PUBLIC SAFETY, CRIME PREVENTION, AND CONTINUING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE CITY; TO REQUIRE THAT AN ELECTION BE HELD ON THE QUESTION OF THE IMPOSITION OF SUCH TAX; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISALTURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. As used in this act, the following terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section unless otherwise clearly indicated by the context in which they are used:

a. "Alcoholic beverage" means any alcoholic liquid, including wines of more than five percent (5%) of alcohol by weight, capable of being consumed as a beverage by a human being, but shall not include light wine, light spirit product and beer, as defined in Section 67-3-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, but shall include native wines and native spirits. The words "alcoholic beverage" shall not include ethyl alcohol manufactured or distilled solely for fuel purposes or beefer of an alcoholic content of more than eight percent (8%) by weight if the beer is legally manufactured in this state for sale in another state.

b. "Board" means the Board of Mayor and Commissioners of the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi.

c. "City" means the City of Clarksdale, Mississippi.

d. "Hemp" means the plant Cannabis sativa L. and any part of that plant, including the seeds thereof and all derivatives, extracts, cannabinoids, isomers, acids, salts and salts of isomers, whether growing or not, with a delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol

(THC) concentration of not more than three-tenths percent (0.3%) on a dry weight basis that is grown or processed.

e. "Hemp product" means a finished product that is intended for human consumption, contains any part of the hemp plant, including naturally occurring cannabinoids, compounds, concentrates, extracts, isolates, or resins, and contains less than three-tenths percent (0.3%) of THC.

f. "Marijuana" means all parts of the plant of the genus cannabis, the flower, the seeds thereof, the resin extracted from any part of the plant and every compound, manufacture, salt, derivative, mixture or preparation of the plant, its seeds or its resin, including whole plant extracts. Such term shall not mean cannabis-derived drug products approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration under Section 505 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

g. "Person" means any individual, company, corporation, partnership, association, joint venture, estate, trust, or any other group, or combination acting as a unit, and the plural as well as the singular, unless the intention to give a more limited meaning is disclosed by the context.

h. "Retailer" includes every person whose principal business is that of selling merchandise at retail, who shall sell, or offer for sale any alcoholic beverage, hemp, marijuana, or tobacco to the consumer.

i. "Sale" means an exchange for money or goods, giving away, or distributing any alcohol, hemp, marijuana, or tobacco as defined in this chapter.

j. "Tobacco" means any cigarettes, cigars, cheroots, stogies, smoking tobacco (including granulated, plug cut, crimp cut, ready rubbed, and other kinds and forms

of tobacco, or substitutes thereof, prepared in such manner as to be suitable for smoking in a pipe or cigarette) and including plug and twist chewing tobacco and snuff, when such "tobacco" is manufactured and prepared for sale or personal consumption. All words used herein shall be given the meaning as defined in the regulations of the Treasury Department of the United States of America. The term "tobacco" also includes heated tobacco products such as products that contain tobacco that produces an inhalable aerosol by (i) heating the tobacco without combustion of the tobacco or (ii) heat generated from a combustion source that only or primarily heats rather than burns the tobacco.

SECTION 2. (1) For the purpose of providing funds to promote public safety and continuing to promote economic growth in the city, the Board, in its discretion, may levy, assess and collect from every person, firm and corporation operating a retail establishment licensed to sale tobacco, hemp, marijuana, or alcohol, in the city, a tax which shall be in addition to all other taxes and assessments imposed by the city, as provided in this act.

(2) The tax shall be imposed upon every person, firm or corporation operating as a Retailer in the City, at a rate not to exceed two percent (2%) of the gross proceeds of the sales of such Retailer.

(3) Persons liable for the tax imposed pursuant to this act shall add the amount of tax to the gross proceeds from sales and shall collect, insofar as practicable, the respective amount of the tax due by him from the person receiving the products at the time of payment for the products.

(4) The tax shall be collected by and paid to the Department of Revenue in the same manner that state sales taxes are computed, collected and paid; and the full enforcement provisions and all

other provisions of Chapter 65, Title 27, Mississippi Code of 1972, shall apply as necessary to the implementation and administration of this act.

(5) Except for any amount retained by the Department of Revenue under Section 27-3-58, Mississippi Code of 1972, the proceeds of the tax shall be paid to the city on or before the fifteenth day of the month following the month in which they were collected.

(6) The proceeds of the tax shall be deposited into the general fund of the city and may be expended for any purpose authorized by law for expenditures of city general fund money, including the purpose of carrying out the programs and activities of the commission under the provisions of this act; however, accounting for receipts and expenditures of the proceeds of the tax shall be made separately as provided.

SECTION 3. Before any tax authorized under this act may be imposed, the Board shall adopt a resolution declaring its intention to levy the tax, setting forth the amount of the tax to be imposed, the date upon which the tax shall become effective and calling for an election to be held on the question. The date of the election shall be fixed in the resolution. Notice of such intention shall be published once each week for at least three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper published or having a general circulation in the City, with the first publication of the notice to be made not less than twenty-one (21) days before the date fixed in the resolution for the election and the last publication to be made not more than seven (7) days before the election. At the election, all qualified electors of the City may vote, and the ballots used in the election shall have printed thereon a brief statement of the amount and purposes of the proposed tax levy and the words "FOR THE TAX" and, on a separate line, "AGAINST THE TAX" and the voters shall vote by placing a cross (X) or check (√) opposite their choice on the proposition. When the results of the election shall have been canvassed and certified, the City may levy the tax if sixty percent (60%) of the

qualified electors who vote in the election vote in favor of the tax. At least thirty (30) days before the effective date of the tax provided in this section, the Board shall furnish to the Department of Revenue a certified copy of the resolution evidencing the tax.

SECTION 4. Before the expenditure of the proceeds of the tax authorized by this act, a budget reflecting the anticipated receipts and expenditures shall be approved by the Board. The first budget of receipts and expenditures shall cover the period beginning with the effective date of the tax and ending with the end of the City's fiscal year, and thereafter, the budget shall be on the same fiscal basis as the budget of the City.

SECTION 5. Accounting for the receipts and expenditures of the funds derived from the proceeds of the tax authorized by this act shall be made separately from the accounting of receipts and expenditures of the general fund and any other funds of the City. The records reflecting the receipts and expenditures of these funds shall be audited annually by an independent certified public accountant and the audit shall be included in the General Purpose Statement of the City. The audit shall be made and completed as soon as practicable after the close of the City's fiscal year, and copies of the report of the audit shall be filed with the clerk of the Board. The expense of this audit may be paid from the funds derived pursuant to Section 2 of this act.

SECTION 6. This act shall be liberally construed for the purposes prescribed herein, the power granted by this act shall be deemed to be full and complete authority for the imposition and collection of the tax and the expenditure of the proceeds thereof and shall be construed as additional, cumulative and supplemental to any power granted to the City by any general or local and private act of the Legislature.

SECTION 7. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Case: 25CH1:25-cv-00152 Document #: 2 Filed: 02/14/2025 Page 19 of 30

Our View

Secrecy, deception erode public trust

Your *Clarksdale Press Register* will be the first to say that a sin tax that would pay police to fight crime in Clarksdale is a good idea.

So why did the City of Clarksdale fail to go to the public with details about this idea before it sent a resolution to the Mississippi Legislature seeking a two-percent tax on alcohol, marijuana and tobacco?

Mayor Chuck Espy has always touted how "open" and "transparent" he is and he is "not like previous administrations of the past 30 years."

So why did Espy seek a Special Called Meeting of the Board of Mayor and Commissioners to finalize details of this move?

The notice was posted at city hall as required by law and said it would "give appropriate notice thereof to the media."

This newspaper was never notified. We know of no other media organization that was notified.

But back to what the city was trying to do.

Yes, there are deadlines for submitting legislation to Jackson. But this tax has been discussed in at least two meetings and has been reported in the pages of this paper.

Have commissioners or the mayor gotten kickback from the community? Until Tuesday we had not heard of any. Maybe they just want a few nights in Jackson to lobby for this idea - at public expense.

As with all legislation, the devil is in the details and how legislation often morphs into something else that benefits somebody else.

An idea that sought to pay police higher wages for the toughest job in any community is admirable. But the way the resolution sought by the city of Clarksdale is now written gives us cause for concern.

The money - our money - can now be spent to "support and promote public safety, crime prevention and continued economic growth in the city."

Does that mean the fire department, 911, chamber of commerce and their pet projects?

Does that promotion mean, giving away candy at Halloween, toy giveaways at Christmas and hosting events where politicians can hand out goody bags to voters?

This newspaper feels the original intent serves the purpose of all - putting police on the streets of Clarksdale.

More police will lead to more patrols, more patrols will lead to more arrests, more arrests will lead to less crime and less crime will make us all feel safer in our homes and neighborhoods.

Our Clarksdale Board of Mayor and Commissioners have stumped their toe on this one. They took a good idea, let their focus drift and made us suspicious.

The Clarksdale Press Register
(Clarksdale, Miss.)
• (USPS 115-960) • Founded 1865
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All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.
Floyd Ingram, publisher/editor
floyd@pressregister.com

We'll always remember Pe

Clarksdale lost two good men in January. Y'all knew Ed Peacock and Pete Johnson a lot longer than I did.

I have to believe that means their deaths hurt you more than it did me.

I too grieved the passing of two guys who grew to become my friends. I know both were true Christians and I rest in that.

Yes, January was tough on Clarksdale.

Floyd Ingram

Ed Peacock

I have lived a lot of places and met a lot of people in my business, but Ed Peacock was one of a kind.

He was meticulous to a fault, but the bad part was he expected you to be like that too!

The desire to seek excellence in all that we do is a character trait rapidly fading in today's culture.

The stories they told at his funeral about his attention to detail made us laugh when we came there to cry. Ed would have appreciated that.

On my first day in Clarksdale I was taken to Yazoo Pass for morning coffee. Ed Peacock spotted me as a newcomer and stepped in my direction to introduce himself. His was the first hand I shook in Clarksdale, Mississippi. And in classic Delta fashion he asked about my family and what church I went to.

He was the true Southern Gentleman.

It showed most in those letters he wrote, with his graceful cursive script and the proper use of just the right word.

Ed wrote me letters of praise when he liked my work. I would get one of ted through the tournament, the post season and won it all in Omaha.

I smile when I think about Ed in Omaha to see it happen. Ed was the kind of man to make things happen.

Pete Johnson

Why Pete Johnson took me under his wing when I came to Clarksdale I do not know.

Maybe it was the politician in him that knew the value and power of the press. I believe it was much deeper than that.

Pete loved a challenge and didn't shy away from problems or the people who caused them. Can you imagine being the Auditor of the State of Mississippi?

He was always the statesman, could put together a team and knew the value of timing and when to apply pressure and when to seek common ground. He was also one of the best leaders I have ever known.

Pete's ability to pick up the phone and call powerful people and make it happen was impressive.

I was only around him twice when he made those calls, and he made thousands of them. I found out he once called my boss when I was in a tight and told him to support me and explained the situation.

Pete was a great story teller, and as a journalist I admired that. The best part they were all true stories,

Exhibit "C"

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BREAKING NEWS

HYDE-SMITH TO CHAIR SENATE AGRICULTURE SUBCOMMITTEE (/INDEX.PHP/HYDE-SMITH-CHAIR AGRICULTURE-SUBCOMMITTEE)

Updated 4 hours ago

THE CLARKSDALE Press Register
Clarksdale and Coahoma County's #1 news source

FREE CONTENT

EDITORIAL: SECRECY, DECEPTION ERODE PUBLIC TRUST

By THE PRESS REGISTER
Sat,02/08/25-3:00AM, **347 Reads**

Your *Clarksdale Press Register* will be the first to say that a sin tax that would pay police to fight crime in Clarksdale is a good idea.

So why did the City of Clarksdale fail to go to the public with details about this idea before it sent a resolution to the Mississippi Legislature seeking a two-percent tax on alcohol, marijuana and tobacco?

Mayor Chuck Espy has always touted how "open" and "transparent" he is and he is "not like previous administrations of the past 30 years."

So why did Espy seek a Special Called Meeting of the Board of Mayor and Commissioners to finalize details of this move?

The notice was posted at city hall as required by law and said stated the city would "give appropriate notice thereof to the media."

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This newspaper was never notified. We know of no other media organization that was notified.

But back to what the city was trying to do.

Yes, there are deadlines for submitting legislation to Jackson. But this tax has been discussed in at least two meetings and has been reported in the pages of your *Clarksdale Press Register*.

Have commissioners or the mayor gotten kick-back from the community? Until Tuesday we had not heard of any. Maybe they just want a few nights in Jackson to lobby for this idea - at public expense.

As with all legislation, the devil is in the details and how legislation often morphs into something else that benefits somebody else.

An idea that sought to pay police higher wages for the toughest job in any community is admirable. But the way the resolution sought by the city of Clarksdale is now written gives us cause for concern.

The money - our money - can now be spent to "support and promote public safety, crime prevention and continued economic growth in the city."

Does that mean the fire department, 911, Chamber of Commerce and their pet projects?

Does that promotion mean, giving away candy at Halloween, toy giveaways at Christmas and hosting events where politicians can hand out goody bags to votersin the name of safety?

This newspaper feels the original intent serves the purpose of all - putting police on the streets of Clarksdale.

More police will lead to more patrols, more patrols will lead to more arrests, more arrests will lead to less crime and less crime will make us all feel safer in our homes and neighborhoods.

Our Clarksdale Board of Mayor and Commissioners have stumped their toe on this one. They took a good idea, let their focus drift, and made us suspicious.

-30-

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https://www.pressregister.com/index.php/editorial-secrecy-deception-erode-public-trust

Exhibit D

FREE CONTENT

CLARKSDALE SENDS 2-PERCENT 'SIN' TAX LEVY TO JACKSON FOR APPROVAL

By THE PRESS REGISTER
Sat,02/08/25-2:00AM, 546 Reads

The Clarksdale Board of Mayor and Commissioners met in a quickly called meeting this week and approved a resolution seeking to levy taxes on all purchases of alcohol, hemp, marijuana and tobacco in the city.

The idea has been discussed repeated by the board and the concept covered by your *Clarksdale Press Register* at least twice, but it wasn't until the Tuesday, Feb. 4 meeting that details of the plan to levy a 2-percent tax were made public.

Tuesday's meeting was held at noon and posted on the door of city hall. The notice said the special called meeting followed state law and the media would be notified. The *Clarksdale Press Register* was not notified of that meeting.

The meeting saw commissioners, on a motion by Ward 1 Commissioner Bo Plunk, a second by Ward 2 Commissioner Jimmy Harris and unanimously supported by Ward 3 Commissioner Willie Turner and Ward 4 Commissioner Ed Seals, approve the resolution that now heads to Jackson for review by the Mississippi Legislature.

If the resolution becomes law, a referendum would be held in the city to approve the levy and would have to pass by 60-

percent of the votes cast.

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Nancy Pennington, *Director*
We wave many thanks to our Volunteers and our Advisory Board:
Advisory Board: Rev. Hank Lee, AMD of North Delta Baptist Association, Lori Burchfield, our Bookkeeper, Pastor Gerald Castillo, Shoal Ground, Andre Chow, Pastor Robert Lemay, Gloria Day, President, Diane Jones, Pastor Don Sandlin, Dixie Husband
Trained Volunteers: Gloria Abernathy, Gloria Day, Jean Doll, Tess Hardin, Clara Hartzell, Dixie Husband, Elizabeth Jones, Jean Morgan, Andrea Nunn, Nita Pharr, Roberta Phillips, Emily Sandlin, Christine Williams, Lori Burchfield, Frances Byrd, Rita Allen, Charlotte Sandlin

Healing Hearts
Grief Support Group
Support for Families or Individuals who have lost a loved one.
Currently doing online watch party. Later we will be meeting on the second Friday of each month
6:00 p.m.
Find us on Facebook

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The resolution asks that a 2-percent tax be levied on top of an 11-percent tourism tax for alcohol served or purchased anywhere in Clarksdale. The new levy will add 2-percent to the purchase of tobacco, hemp or marijuana in the city limits.

The initial idea was for the levy to go strictly to the Clarksdale Police Department to hire officers, but language in the resolution states "funds (will) support public safety, crime prevention, and continuing economic growth in the city."

Espy said in Tuesday's meeting the deadline for submitting such legislation is next week and he would go to Jackson and help work the measure through the Mississippi House and Senate.

City Board attorney Melvin Miller said the language in the measure has been vetted by Butler & Snow and should pass any constitutional challenge.

The language for hemp and marijuana were added to tax any cannabinoid extracts, powders or salts and the sale of marijuana from a medical marijuana dispensary.

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EOE M/F

While cannabinoid products have been sold in Clarksdale for years, the city does not have a medical marijuana dispensary at this time. The city had requests to allow at least two

medical marijuana dispensaries on South State Street/Old Highway 61 more than a year ago, but the businesses have been held up by state regulations.

In July the city voted to allow police and sheriff's deputies to work side-by-side to bolster a need for law enforcement personnel in both departments. The community had just notched it's 13th homicide and would end 2024 with 21 officially reported homicides.

Clarksdale PD currently has two investigators assigned to the Criminal Investigation Division and has 23 sworn officers on its roster. The Coahoma County Sheriff's Department has about two dozen officers.

The Sheriff's Department had the number of sworn officers plummet after 2023 county elections made Mario Magsby Sheriff and saw him hire his own officers. In 2021 the Clarksdale Police Department saw its workforce dwindle after the city hosted a rally as part of Black Lives Matter events across the country denouncing police brutality and telling authorities not to use force against the populace.

In June 2021 the city passed a number of measures seeking to reduce how officers respond with force in Clarksdale. The city's Human Resource officer Tara Slack has had virtually no luck in recruiting or attracting officers to the Clarksdale Police Department.

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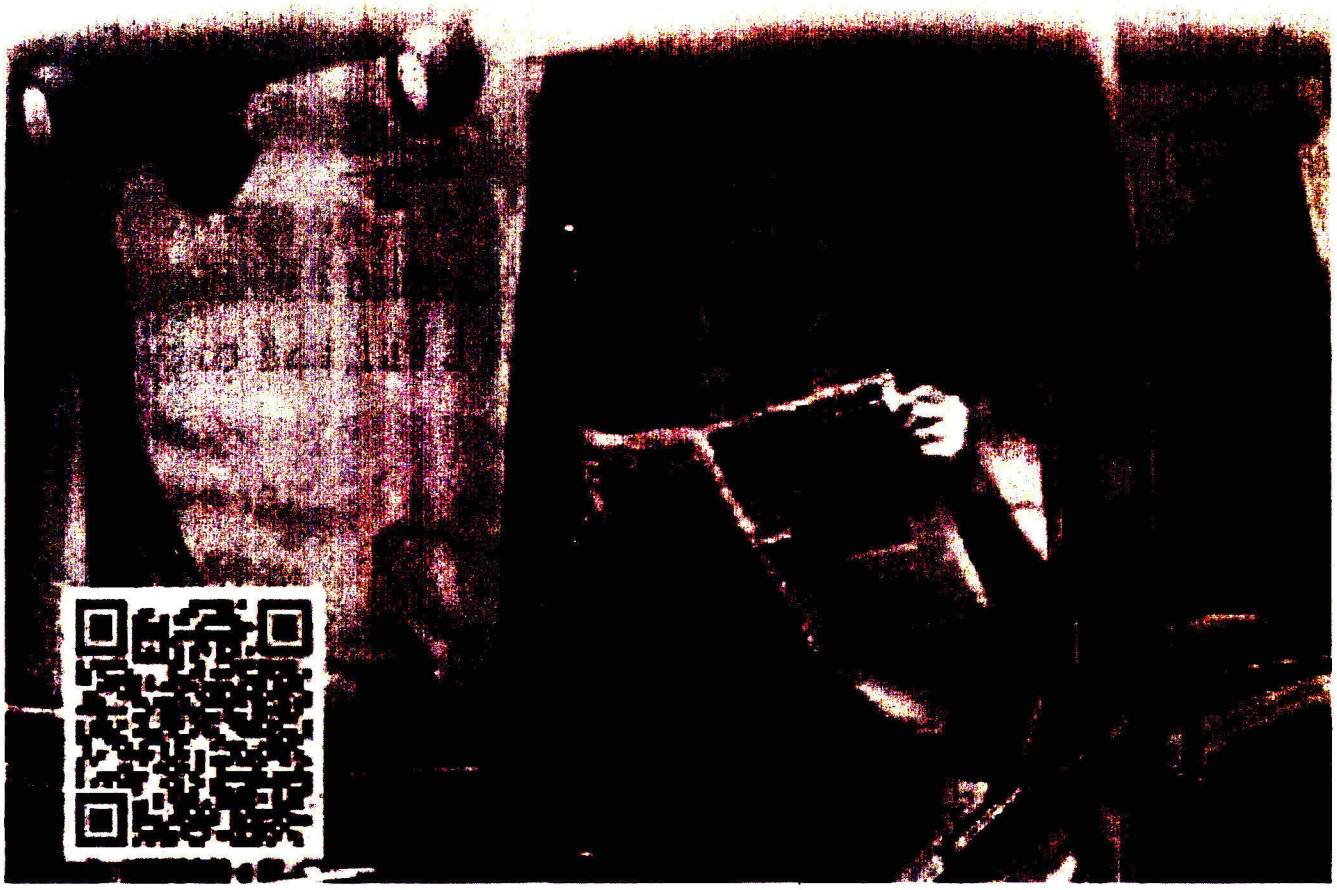

The Clarksdale Police Department is paying fulltime veteran officer up to $44,122 a year. Part-time officers can make $18

an hour.

The annual compensation for Mayor went from $86,421 to $122,421.92 and Commissioner went from $26,650 to $46,650 on the city first meeting in June 2021.

The Clarksdale Police Department was once budgeted for budgeted for more than 40 police officers.

Since the resolution by the city must first be approved by the legislature, no date has been set for a referendum. The resolution does ask that the tax go into effect immediately upon approval by Clarksdale voters.

The tax would be collected, monitored and enforced by the Mississippi Department of Revenue with the city getting checks from the state based on confirmed collections.

Federation Towers -Clarksdale

is accepting applications for residency. All applicants must be at least 62 years of age or disabled. Applications are available between the hours of 8am to 5pm at
1160 Ritchie Street
Clarksdale, MS 38614

For more information call
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