

November 3, 2025  
5:00 p.m.  
Ripley Power & Light Board  
Ripley City Courtroom

Mayor Fitzhugh called meeting to order and requested Recorder Buckner to issue roll call.

Board members present: Alston, Chipman, Frazier, Keeley, Long, Thompson (arrived 5:20 p.m.) and Fitzhugh

Board members absent: none

Also present: Donna Buckner, Attorney Rachel Jackson, Sergeant Herbert Gwynn and Superintendent Mike Allmand

Visitors: Linda Love, Jessica Clark and Cinda Tillman,

1. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Frazier to approve September 8, 2025 minutes as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye

Public comments: none

Mayor's comments: none

Superintendent Allmand discussed proposal to purchase city owned 4.45-acre lot on Highland Extended necessary for the expansion of substation.

Attorney Jackson stated she just met with Mayor Fitzhugh and Superintendent Allmand regarding the property. She stated pursuant to both the charter and the Municipal Plant Law provides that property that is held by a utility is held in the name of the municipality so there would be no purchase from the city because any property that Ripley Power & Light holds would be held in the city's name. There would be no point of a transfer but there can be an exclusive agreement to accomplish what Mr. Allmand is asking for. If the agreement were to be perpetual (meaning Ripley Power & Light has the property until they no longer want the property) it can reflect what is determined to be the value of the property itself as a use agreement. The utilities accounts are separate from the city's accounts. Anything Ripley Power & Light may want the exclusive use of they can pay the general fund for the value of it or they could pay an annual fee. It's whatever the board decides appropriate.

Superintendent Allmand stated that when Ripley Power & Light acquired the property that the substation is on, Ripley Power & Light purchased the property from the city and they have the deed to it at the power company even though the city owns the power company. It's sort of one in the same. Paying for a perpetual agreement is different from what's been done in the past.

Attorney Jackson stated she doesn't doubt that. It's quite possible that it has been done differently. She's looking at the current state of the charter and the current state of the Municipal Plant Law which are consistent.

Alderman Alston asked if RPL wanted to purchase the property from the city?

Mr. Allmand stated they are accustomed to purchasing property. They just did that on Webb Street. They bought it as the power company but the power company is owned by the city. There really isn't any separation. Not sure why you would give a perpetual agreement when you can just deed it over because if, for instance, you sold the power company it would be the city doing it and city already owns the power company.

Attorney Jackson stated she thinks what Mr. Allmand is saying is the department is already owned by the city so what's the problem with conveying the property to the department because all the property that is owned by the department is already owned by the city. But because the law specifically says "it shall be taken in the name of the municipality" not a department or a utility, a transfer would have no legal effect. There's no point to it and it's contrary to how the law reads to put it in the name of the department. If what they want is exclusive use of the property she stated she doesn't understand the rational of them wanting to hold it in the name of the department when the department is owned by the city.

Alderman Alston so can he purchase it?

Attorney Jackson stated no.

Alderman Fraizer asked when the city purchased the property did it go in the city's name.

Attorney Jackson stated yes it should have gone into the City of Ripley's name because that's what the charter and the MEPL provides (Title 7, Chapter 52, Section 117c of the MEPL).

Mr. Allmand asked how long has that been in there.

Attorney Jackson stated since the '90's. Mr. Allmand can have exactly what he wants which is departmental use of the property.

Alderman Chipman asked what the property value is.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated the city hasn't gone that far. He's certain we can come up with an agreeable price. There may have been some transactions in the past but we just had two court rulings that said the power company is owned by the city. Frankly, the power company is not a company or a corporation.

Attorney Jackson stated it's not an entity that should hold property and that's exactly what

the MEPL says. It doesn't hold property in its name. The property is held in the name of the city that is used by the department. There's nothing being taking away from Ripley Power & Light here. Ripley Power & Light still gets exclusive rights of the property. There's just no need legally for a transfer of ownership.

Mr. Allmand stated he would like to come to some price that they can pay because he needs to let his consultant know tomorrow that we have done this. Otherwise, we will have to change the design. The property right next to it sold for \$12,500 per acre.

2. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Alston to approve exclusive use perpetual agreement for 4.45-acre city owned property at \$12,500 per acre to Ripley Power & Light for the extension of Ripley Power & Light substation located on Highland Extended. Roll call. All aye.
3. Motion by Alderman Alston and second by Alderman Thompson to approve June 1, 2023 – May 31, 2024 write-off's Reserve to Uncollectible Accounts in the amount of \$2,750.67. All aye.
4. Motion by Alderman Keeley and second by Alderman Long to approve 2% Christmas bonus. Roll call. All aye.

Mayor Fitzhugh adjourned meeting at 5:36 p.m.

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Donna Buckner, Recorder

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Craig Fitzhugh, Mayor

November 3, 2025  
5:45 p.m.  
Public Hearing  
Ripley City Courtroom

- An ordinance of the City of Ripley, Tennessee amending wards for the election of Aldermen in the City of Ripley

Mayor Fitzhugh called the meeting to order and requested Recorder Buckner to issue roll call.

Board members present: Alston, Chipman, Frazier, Keeley, Long, Thompson and Fitzhugh

Board members absent: none

Also present: Donna Buckner, Attorney Rachel Jackson, Sergeant Herbert Gwynn, Superintendent Scott Nelson, Superintendent Johnie Ford, Fire Chief Tracey Worlds and Captain Mark Crook

Visitors: Linda Love, Jessica Clark, Cinda Tillman, Tommy R. Sanders, Dorothy Bond, Dwight Beard, Tonia Beard, Dasia Beard, Kaye Jordan, Pastor Rev. Terry D. Barlow, Sr., J.C. Bonds, Ronald Barlow, Jay Heath and Marcus Keeley

Recorder Buckner stated she and Cinda Tillman of the Election Commission worked with the comptroller's office because they have the census data. The census data helps us stay within a percentage within all three of our voting wards. We have 7,800 population. They are looking to get 2,600 for each of the three districts. With that in mind, Ward 1 has to lose 103, Ward 2 has to lose 290 and Ward 3 has to gain a total of 393. Working with that, we have to stay with a continuous line of the districts. We also worked with the Election Office to make sure we don't go within the voting districts in the county.

Cinda Tillman stated this will not affect any of the county districts. It will only affect the wards in the city.

Recorder Buckner stated when we looked at the lines, we had to swap the numbers in the census blocks.

Alderman Keeley asked how did we determine which streets we were moving.

Ms. Tillman stated that because we had to move 103 people in Ward 1 (this has nothing to do with voters, this is people only) we looked at the census blocks in order to move these people to Ward 2. We looked at the closest boundary lines in order to pull them out and put them into Ward 2. Between Ward 2 and Ward 3 we pulled out census blocks that were connected to go into Ward 3. Which means we also pulled out 103 that we moved to Ward 2 and took an additional 103 from the backside of Ward 2 to be aligned with Ward 3. We did some juggling based on census blocks that were given to us to use and we kept them as close to the ward lines as possible. She stated that she has a bigger print in her office if

anyone would like to come by and look at it to actually see the movement of what was taken out. If you compare the old map and the new map you can see the areas that were moved.

Alderman Alston asked when you moved Chickasaw, Spring and Barbee are the numbers shown there voters?

Recorder Buckner stated its people.

Attorney Jackson stated they are not making changes based on how many registered voters are in the census blocks. It based on population and census block numbers only.

Ms. Tillman stated it's the same way when they do re-districting.

Alderman Keeley stated that it will eventually affect voters.

Ms. Tillman stated that it will affect some but there are some areas that have small amounts of people. Until the change is made, she won't know the exact counts. The total ended up being 400 people, that's adults and children, into Ward 3. She can't say how many are adults or if they are registered or not but she doesn't think it's going to be a big shift in voters. She has a list of streets involved and if anyone wants to come to her office she will try to give an estimate on voters. But until the change is made in the computer, she won't know how many voters it will affect.

Mayor Fitzhugh asked who actually made these calls? Notice the map was done by the comptroller.

Ms. Tillman stated the comptroller sent Donna the email. Donna called her and they went over the maps and looked at the census blocks. We figured out the best plan that would cover moving these census blocks into the wards. We marked up a print and sent it to Matthew Hill at the comptroller's office. He prepared the maps and sent them back to us for review. Once they are acceptable and approved, they will become permanent.

Alderman Chipman asked how many people came out of first district?

Recorder Buckner stated they were looking for 103 but it was actually 109.

Alderman Alston asked if the 293 people coming out of Ward 2 included children in the mixture?

Recorder Buckner stated yes. When the census count was taken it included the number of children in the household.

Ms. Tillman stated that every 10 years they get a total household count and that's what they put in the census blocks. Total household counts.

Ms. Tonia Beard, Officer of the Lauderdale County Branch #5660 NAACP and resident of

Ward 2, addressed the board and citizens with a statement (included).

Recorder Buckner stated for clarification, this is only for the city elections. It does not pertain to any federal elections or county elections.

Ms. Tillman stated that the 2026 city election will only have the office of judge. The next city election for mayor and aldermen will be 2028. The state is the one telling us that these changes need to be made. The census all over the country or everywhere is done every 10 years. The state also does census' every 2 years. They pull figures from every department staying on top of how the population changes. They did it in 2022 and in 2024. Because of the population shifting so much, the state sent Ms. Buckner a letter saying that this needs to be addressed. It has to be completed 90 days prior to the next city election which is in 2026 even though the mayor and aldermen are not on the ballot. It's still considered a city election.

Ms. Beard stated the question is what's the rush?

Ms. Tillman stated it has to be done 90 days prior to the August 2026 election.

Ms. Beard asked if the information had been shared with the board prior to it coming before them for a vote?

Ms. Tillman stated the prints were drawn up with the changes and presented to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen for review.

Recorder Buckner stated that the changes were given to the board last month.

Mr. Beard stated that it also went before them for a vote.

Recorder Buckner stated it was 1<sup>st</sup> reading. Nothing is finalized until the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

Mr. Beard stated that he was also representing Ward 2. He noticed and was reiterating what was read, that there were some discord and newness when it was read last month. He would like to see that type of activity in a workshop before it comes to a setting like this. This makes the mayor and aldermen look like they are moving forward on something they were seeing for the first time in this meeting. He thinks the board should have saw it, reviewed it, identified what the streets were going to be proposed for the redistricting or re-warding and agreed upon it before it got to this point. If they are representing Ward 2, they should come to the citizens and ask them to join in a town hall meeting to review the redistricting before they make their answer yes or no. It seems to him it didn't go through a good procedure.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated he understood from a procedural standpoint, but under the rules and the law, it has to be before them before they can discuss it.

Mr. Beard ask if they couldn't discuss it in a workshop to understand it better?

Mayor Fitzhugh stated the first requirement in the procedure is the first reading which puts it before us (last month), the second requirement is the public hearing which is what we are having now to allow us to hear from the community. He personally thinks we have plenty of time before we have to do this. He has no problem having a workshop and delaying the second vote for an extended period of time but he thinks we are following the law on every bill we have and not just this one. This did come from the comptroller who made the request based on the census.

Attorney Jackson stated that Donna brought the letter from the comptroller to her attention when it was received. She's dealing with a limited amount of time from when it was received until when it has to be passed. She asked Ms. Tillman for clarity on the primary election or the general election in August.

Ms. Tillman stated it's the general election in August and has to be finalized 90 days prior to that date.

Attorney Jackson asked what are the changes made and what is the timeline for her to do that?

Ms. Tillman stated she takes the list of all the streets in the city of Ripley and the maps and documents the changes. She puts those changes into the computer. At that time, she can distribute the actual figures as far as voters are concerned. This process of making the changes and mailing cards to every citizen in the city would take approximately a month.

Ms. Linda Love asked for further clarification of moving people from one ward to another.

Ms. Tillman stated there are 103 people living in Ward 1 that will have to go to Ward 2. Ward 2 needs 290 people to be moved to Ward 3. But you have to count the 103 that came from Ward 1 so we will take a total of 393 people from Ward 2 and move to Ward 3.

Ms. Love asked if the 7,800 total citizens of Ripley will be divided into the three wards evenly?

Ms. Tillman stated the comptroller has a program that generates the census blocks and they send us the district lines. In past county meetings, the state has come down and tweaked certain areas moving people into different districts. The state does these prints and when she makes her changes, she submits the changes, they will review it and if it lines up with their prints, they will accept it. In this case, because it was such a few amount of people, we went through and made the changes where we saw it would fit the census blocks and stay as close to the lines as possible. We have the before and after and again if anyone wants to come look at the big maps, they are more than welcome. We can discuss and even check the streets for voter population. We can check heavily voter areas. She can give estimates per street.

Mr. Tommy Sanders stated this redistricting thing came through the mill that it was a diversity thing because certain areas had more African Americans than other areas. When

they decided they wanted to pull from an area, they did go where the diversity existed. There is a list somewhere of who all voted and whether they are a Democrat or a Republican. If you're just going to move folks from one to another and not know the status, you are really not doing justice.

Ms. Tillman addressed Mr. Sanders and stated that when they looked at the maps it had no color, no voters. It's population only. We didn't look to see the areas. We looked for a census block on the boundary line which is normal procedure. It has nothing to do with anything else. She reminded Mr. Sanders of a previous county meeting in which he attended when they did census changes and tweaked some voter in some areas. They ended up putting more population into Ripley 4 at that time. They didn't look at race or any of that. They were looking at figures only.

Mr. Sanders stated that he begs to differ with Ms. Tillman. There is a list out there that shows who votes where. She should try to find that list so she can see when you change people from one area to another and you don't know if they are Democrat or Republican, black or white, you are not doing any good at all. All you're doing is moving bodies around.

Ms. Tillman stated that's the way a census works. They do it by figures.

Mr. Sanders stated when a comptroller sends information here that's when the public should be involved. If the regular people chosen to do this stay and are going to just melt and vote the way the people tell them to vote that's not justification either. He's trying to get justification as far as the election is concerned because we are in trouble there. Certain wards have had 30 or 40% or 50% more African Americans than the other wards. It didn't even come close to being equal. As far as he's concern, we are trying to get equalization on the board. We need actual facts and things we can make work.

Ms. Tillman addressed Mr. Sanders by saying she doesn't know anything about a list that's out. She did not submit a list. She doesn't know what list he's talking about and if someone has one, she would like to see it. The list available, as far as a voter list, is a list that comes from past elections where you tell who has voted but that doesn't have anything to do with this census count. The census is adults and children. It's not voters. She can't do anything about race or how people vote. She invited Mr. Sanders to come to her office to discuss his concerns and if she can't give him the answers he needs, she will call the state and get them.

Mr. Sanders stated he wants the community to know what's happening.

Ms. Kaye Jordan stated that based on what Ms. Tillman has said, it would take about a month to go through the processes she needs to go through and then she has 90 days to complete the whole process prior to the 2026 election. So, April 2026 and then from May to August is 90 days prior to the election. Could we not, from this point until April, have some transparency meetings with all of the concerns that are being raised tonight?

Mayor Fitzhugh stated that's what he suggested. We just want to get questions out. It's

clear, in his opinion, we are not moving forward tonight.

Ms. Jordan stated it appears that not only were they (citizens) not aware but the board wasn't aware.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated the board was aware but we were making some assumptions that the process at the comptroller's office was appropriate. It appears that it is the way it's done and we have to believe that it is. But we want citizens to feel that way too. We have to have a vote done before April if not we will have to do something else.

Recorder Buckner stated it is important to go to the Election Commission office to review the census blocks.

Alderman Keeley stated she doesn't think there's a question about the fact that it has to happen but it's the process to get there. Other people want to be involved in the process.

Recorder Buckner stated when you go to the Election Commission office and see the maps it may be easier.

Alderman Keeley stated just Ms. Donna and Ms. Cinda making those decisions is the problem. Others want to be involved in making those decisions or understand how you arrived at those decisions.

Ms. Tillman stated, generally, it is up to the Mayor and Aldermen to make those decisions or tweak it or even have the state involved.

Alderman Keeley stated we didn't know to come and look at the maps or the blocks. It was just presented to us at the last meeting.

Recorder Buckner stated that this could be a first draft. Look at what's on here and then look at the census blocks and compare to see if there are other alternatives available.

Ms. Keeley asked are others welcome to help make decisions about how those people will be transferred from ward to ward?

Ms. Tillman stated it's good to have public input because a lot of times they may point out something that you might not see. However, you need to start somewhere and this is where we started. Then it's up to you all to tweak it. You can do it based on just the board or include community involvement.

Alderman Keeley stated there was a big amount taken from Ward 2. She knows those were voters because she looked at the streets.

Recorder Buckner stated there is one census block in Ward 2 that is a problem. She and Ms. Tillman have talked to the comptroller's office numerous times.

Ms. Tillman stated it was Ward 3 that had a large reduction of population which caused her concern.

Alderman Keeley stated she was looking at the streets that were moved in Ward 2. She knows there were people who were voters that were moved. She wants to see which actual streets were moved and how many voters were on those streets.

Ms. Tillman stated those can be changed but it has to be along those boundary lines and by the census blocks. She can only give estimates of voters that may be affected.

Alderman Keeley stated we don't know if they are children or adults.

Attorney Jackson stated that's correct but to do so in order to orchestrate a particular result isn't legal. That's why these are done by population blocks, without identity of voters or demographics, because otherwise, you are orchestrating a particular result. You all know your communities and you know the streets that were impacted and you know who is there and who you at least believe voted in those districts. When you come to a workshop environment and you sit down, it's not like this. It's not a public hearing. So, what needs to happen, in advance of that, is any of the citizens who has vested interests in knowing and understanding what Ms. Tillman is offering to explain and look further into, needs to be done prior to a workshop. There needs to be discussions between the citizens and their representatives because when you come to the workshop, you all will be the participates in the workshop. It's not a community workshop. A workshop of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen is a meeting. The public can come in and observe but it's not a public hearing like tonight. Any alderman can have a workshop with their communities to discuss what's been learned, what they would like to have proposed but coming into a workshop of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen won't be a public participation opportunity.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated the maps were received on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and it was brought before the board in the October 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. The key part was getting it before us so now we are coming to the conclusion of the public hearing, which is required, and as the lawyer said it's our responsibility to learn what we can and work with Ms. Tillman and then the citizens can let us know their concerns.

Mayor Fitzhugh adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

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Donna Buckner, Recorder

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Craig Fitzhugh, Mayor

November 3, 2025

6:15 p.m.

Ripley Board of Mayor and Aldermen

Ripley City Courtroom

Mayor Fitzhugh called the meeting to order and requested Recorder Buckner to issue roll call.

Board members present: Alston, Chipman, Frazier, Keeley, Long, Thompson and Fitzhugh

Board members absent: none

Also present: Donna Buckner, Attorney Rachel Jackson, Sergeant Herbert Gwynn, Superintendent Scott Nelson, Superintendent Johnie Ford, Fire Chief Tracey Worlds and Captain Mark Crook

Visitors: Linda Love, Jessica Clark, Cinda Tillman, Tommy R. Sanders, Dorothy Bond, Dwight Beard, Tonia Beard, Dasia Beard, Kaye Jordan, Pastor Rev. Terry D. Barlow, Sr., J.C. Bonds, Ronald Barlow, Jay Heath and Marcus Keeley

Invocation: Superintendent Scott Nelson

Pledge of Allegiance

1. Motion by Alderman Alston and second by Alderman Frazier to approve October 6, 2025 minutes as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye.
2. Motion by Alderman Long and second by Alderman Chipman to approve October 2025 financial statement as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye.
3. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Long to approve September and October 2025 department reports. All aye.

Mayor Fitzhugh asked Recorder Buckner to explore date in December for workshop for the Board of Mayor and Aldermen for the discussion of changes to election wards within the city.

4. Motion by Alderman Long and second by Alderman Frazier to enclose (fence with gate) the playground in the City of Ripley Park on the North side of Mary Robert Drive, to enhance toddler safety.

Alderman Chipman stated every child's safety in the park is important. We are inspected by the State of Tennessee on playground equipment, on the pool, on the chemicals used in the pool, on the food we serve and this has never, in the 17 years that he has served, been brought up by an inspector of the State of Tennessee. He can understand Alderman's Long concern. The \$14,250 for the fence is not in the budget. He suggested proposing fence for 2025-2026 budget if the board sees the need at that time and can fund it.

Aldermen Long and Frazier withdrew their motions with the proposal to discuss during 2025-2026 budget discussions.

5. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Keeley to approve LPRF change order #3 in the amount of \$3,712.28 for the bathroom project ADA compliance. Roll call. All aye.
6. Motion by Alderman Thompson and second by Alderman Alston to approve TDOT contract #250278 for intersection improvements on SR-3 (US-51) at the following intersections: 1) US-51 North and Cleveland, 2) US-51 South and US-19 East, 3) US-51 South and Volz Road, 4) US-51 North and Industrial Drive (TMA) with city's share of the construction non-participating cost of \$300,000. Roll call. All aye.
7. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Frazier to approve resolution to approve Delta Regional Authority (DRA) contract project #TN-10330 in the amount of \$855,600 for the replacement of two lift stations. Roll call. All aye.
8. Motion by Alderman Alston and second by Alderman Chipman to approve exclusive use perpetual agreement in the amount of \$12,500 per acre to Ripley Power & Light for the expansion of substation on Highland Extended. Roll call. All aye.
9. Motion by Alderman Alston and second by Alderman Chipman to approve 2% employee Christmas bonus as budgeted. Roll call. All aye.
10. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Keeley to authorize city attorney to file judgements, as needed, to address code enforcement issues. All aye.

Meeting adjourned 6:55 p.m.

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Donna Buckner, Recorder

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Craig Fitzhugh, Mayor