October 5, 2026
6:00 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, Superintendent Johnie Ford, Chief Mitchell Turner, Park Director Lee Johnston, Superintendent Mike Allmand and Sergeant Herbert Gwynn

Visitors: T.R. Sanders, Ron Goforth, Marlon Holloway, James Jones, LaKenia Jones, Angela Flowers, Jace Jones, Celeste Henry, Tonia Garrison, Robert Garrison, Minnie Stowe, Dr. Claudia Joplin, Joyce Cotton, Brenda Reese, Brooke Billings and Ketlyn Brarker-WREG News 3, David Cove, Dianne Beard, Gloria Webster, Dwight Beard, James Burnett, Ruby Bonds, Geradine Wright, Dana Rose, Anita Barnes, Jay Heath, Rodney Barnes, Dorisha Wright, Mark Ballard, Pastor Rev. Terry D. Barlow, Sr., Will Barlow, J.C. Bonds, Kayla Keeley, Malinda Russell, Jackie Williams, Marcus Keeley, Donnell Baltimore and Doris Wilson

Invocation: Chief Mitchell Turner

Pledge of Allegiance

1. Motion by Alderman Frazier and second by Alderman Long to approve September 8, 2026 minutes as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye.

2. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Alston to approve September 2026 financial statement as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye.

Correspondence: Tennessee Comptroller

Mayor's comments:

- Squarecrows – month of October on the court square
- City/County Cleanup Day – Saturday, November 7th at 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Ripley City Park
- Boys & Girls Club – approved for Ripley
- Condolences to the Tim Bratton family

Alderman Keeley asked for an update on the Ellena Gooch-Reid case.

Chief Turner stated the case is moving forward in a positive direction and should have some results very soon. He stated he spoke with the district attorney's office and together, this investigation will come with some good results. It's been less than a month and the agencies need to do due diligence to make sure it will not, in turn, give some false information. In his 40 years of law enforcement, there are some cases that he takes home with him. This has been one of those cases. He tries to be transparent with those who come to him and ask questions about the case. Some people may not be satisfied with his answers. Some people may be upset with the police department but know this, he would much rather tell the truth and people be upset than to lie to make them comfortable. Things are being done in this case. There are only certain things that can be shared due to evidentiary value. We can't tell you everything but we will tell you what we can.

3. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Thompson to approve department reports as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye

Public comments: Joyce Cotton stated that we, the citizens of Ripley, Tennessee make the following requests: 1) accountability, 2) transparency, 3) a commitment from the Ripley Police Department in solving the case of Dr. Ellena Gooch-Reid. She stated she met with Chief Turner and he stated information on this case would be turned over to the district attorney. However, he stated the DA could not act on this case because there was not enough evidence presented to him. She then asked the chief what was needed and what had he presented. She has yet to get an answer. Chief Turner then stated it was police business. Dr. Gooch identified at least one or more of her assailants. At least one, allegedly, has left the state. As of now, there has not been any arrests. Why did it take her going to the editor of the local newspaper to inform him of this crime so that the community would be informed for their safety. Why are the suspects running loose and could strike again. Out of the 345 incorporated cities and towns in Tennessee, Ripley ranks third in having the most violent crime. Trailing behind Memphis and Bolivar. Residents face one in 58 chances of becoming a victim in any given year and the crimes possibly going unsolved. The lack of accountability and transparency and unsolved crime have put Ripley under siege. The criminals that broke into Dr. Gooch's home brutally beat her, robbed her and left her to die in her own blood and are still running loose. Dr. Gooch deserves better by the Ripley Police Department and the District Attorney in apprehending and arresting her assailants. The families of the unsolved murders in Ripley deserve that. The shooting victims deserve better. The community deserves better and the unsolved shootings to be solved. She closed by saying she hoped she would not be standing here next month because no arrests have been made, but the citizens of Ripley deserve better.

4. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Frazier to accept Gilford Williams, IV bid offer for cropland rent in the amount of $170,000.00 paid in five equal annual payments of $34,000.00 beginning January 1, 2027. Roll call. Chipman, Frazier, Keeley, Long and Thompson voted aye. Alston voted nay. Motion passed.

5. Motion by Alderman Thompson and second by Alderman Keeley to approve software services agreement between RecDesk, LLC and the City of Ripley for Parks and Recreation reservations and receipting 36-month term $6,284.25 annually. Roll call. All aye

6. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Frazier to approve 1st reading

proposed ordinance amending the text of the official zoning ordinance of Ripley, Tennessee by adopting regulations for Food Truck Courts as recommended by Ripley Planning Commission. All aye

7. Motion by Alderman Frazier and second by Alderman Long to approve 1st reading proposed ordinance of the City of Ripley, Tennessee amending Title 9 Business, Peddlers, Solicitors, etc. Chapter 4-Mobile Food Preparation Vehicles allowing for a one-year permit fee of $250.00. All aye

8. Motion by Alderman Thompson and second by Alderman Alston to approve advertisement for sealed bids for the sale of surplus real property. All aye

9. Motion by Alderman Frazier and second by Alderman Thompson to approve Ripley Power and Light August 2026 financial statement. All aye

Alderman Alston asked the mayor and board what is the plan for future management of Ripley Power and Light Company.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated it was his responsibility to put before the board a successor. He has already had a conversation with MTAS on how to do that. Mr. Allmand is still with us until April of next year so right now we need to maintain status quo. There is an investigation going on and it would be wise for all of us to carry on as we are right now.

Alderman Long stated so there really isn't a plan.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated not yet. It's a big job and it's going to take a good person to take over that job. There will be a transition but it's a little too early to put it out on the table as to what we are doing yet.

Attorney Jackson stated because of the federal investigation our concerns are knowing what the results are and knowing the parameters of the findings of that before presenting to the board anything definite. The mayor's discussions with MTAS have been in the nature a of transition team. Again, to maintain status quo in order to let the investigation finish properly keeping everything in place as it is now in terms of the operations of the department.

Alderman Keeley asked if we have anyone in mind.

Attorney Jackson stated there has been no discussion about that.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated that everything remains the same as we move towards that and he will keep the board involved.

Meeting adjourned 6:45 p.m.

Donna Buckner, Recorder	Craig Fitzhugh, Mayor