Jackson City Council President
Vernon Hartley, Ward 5

219 South President Street
P.O. Box 17
Jackson, MS 39205-0017

November 9, 2026

The Honorable Kenneth I. Stokes
Councilman, Ward 3
Jackson City Council
Jackson, Mississippi

RE: November 3, 2026 City Council Meeting — Conduct and Opportunity to Respond

Dear Councilman Stokes:

I am writing concerning the unfortunate events that occurred during the November 3, 2026, regular meeting of the Jackson City Council.

As you know, the meeting became increasingly tense and disruptive during the introduction of proposed legislation concerning the City's data center moratorium. Several members of the audience expressed strong opposition, and inappropriate personal remarks were directed toward you, including an offensive reference to your mother.

I recognize that these comments were inappropriate and that the atmosphere in the Council chambers was extremely hostile. However, as elected officials, we are expected to maintain our composure and demonstrate professionalism, even under difficult circumstances.

Your response to members of the audience, including reported vulgar and derogatory language and remarks concerning religious attire, raises serious concerns regarding the standards of conduct expected of members of the Jackson City Council.

Section 2-77(1) of the Jackson Code of Ordinances, Rules of Ethical Conduct, requires Councilmembers to maintain decorum, set an example for conduct, and conduct themselves in a manner that does not bring disgrace or embarrassment upon the City of Jackson.

I want to emphasize that this matter does not concern your right to introduce legislation or express your position regarding data centers. Those rights are recognized and respected. The concern is specifically the conduct and exchange that occurred during the Council meeting.

Following the incident, I publicly expressed my belief that disciplinary action warranted consideration. I have since reviewed the circumstances and applicable ordinances and prepared a proposed resolution of censure for discussion with our Council colleagues.

No final determination has been made by the City Council.

In the interest of fairness and due consideration, you are hereby afforded **three (3) business days from receipt of this letter (November 13, 2026)**, excluding City-recognized holidays, to submit a written

response addressing the incident and any information or circumstances you believe the Council should consider.

You will also be afforded an opportunity to address the matter during the Council's review proceedings, consistent with applicable meeting procedures.

Your response will be made available to Councilmembers for consideration before any final action is taken. The Council will defer a final disciplinary determination until your response period has concluded.

I would also encourage you to consider offering a public apology to those affected by the remarks. Such an acknowledgment could help restore confidence in the professionalism and dignity of our Council proceedings.

Councilman Stokes, I respect your years of public service and your commitment to the citizens you represent. Nevertheless, each of us has a responsibility to uphold the standards of conduct established for the Jackson City Council.

My objective is to address this matter fairly, responsibly, and in a manner that protects the integrity of the Council and the public's confidence in our ability to conduct the people's business.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

Vernon W. Hartley SR.

Vernon W. Hartley Sr.
President, Jackson City Council
Councilman, Ward 5

Enclosure: Proposed Resolution of Censure — Working Draft

cc: Members of the Jackson City Council
City Attorney
Clerk of Council

WORKING DRAFT • NOT ADOPTED

CITY OF JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI
JACKSON CITY COUNCIL

PROPOSED RESOLUTION — WORKING DRAFT

A RESOLUTION OF THE JACKSON CITY COUNCIL FORMALLY CENSURING COUNCILMAN KENNETH I. STOKES FOR CONDUCT DURING THE NOVEMBER 3, 2026 CITY COUNCIL MEETING

WHEREAS, during the November 3, 2026 regular City Council meeting, a proposed ordinance concerning the City's data center moratorium generated significant public opposition, interruptions, and personal remarks directed toward Councilman Kenneth I. Stokes; and

WHEREAS, Councilman Stokes responded to members of the audience with vulgar and derogatory language, including remarks concerning religious attire, contributing to the disruption of Council proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Section 2-77(1) of the Jackson Code of Ordinances requires Councilmembers to maintain decorum, set an example for proper conduct, and refrain from behavior that brings disgrace or embarrassment upon the City of Jackson; and

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes that Councilman Stokes has the right to introduce legislation and express his individual position under Section 2-77(2), and that this resolution concerns his conduct, not his position regarding data centers; and

WHEREAS, after considering the circumstances and providing Councilman Stokes an opportunity to respond, the Council determines that the conduct warrants formal disapproval;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. FORMAL CENSURE. The Jackson City Council hereby formally censures Councilman Kenneth I. Stokes for conduct during the November 3, 2026 Council meeting that was inconsistent with the standards established under Section 2-77(1) of the Jackson Code of Ordinances.

SECTION 2. PUBLIC APOLOGY. The Council requests that Councilman Stokes offer a public apology to those affected by his remarks and to the citizens of Jackson.

SECTION 3. SCOPE AND EFFECT. This resolution expresses the Council's formal disapproval and imposes no monetary penalty, removal from office, or additional sanction. It shall be entered into the official Council minutes upon adoption.

ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2026.

DRAFT • FOR DISCUSSION AND LEGAL REVIEW ONLY

WORKING DRAFT • NOT ADOPTED

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JACKSON CITY COUNCIL

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