

July 6, 2026
5:00 p.m.
Public Hearing
Ripley City Courtroom

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

Board members present: Alston, Chipman, Long, and Fitzhugh

Board members absent: Fraizer, Keeley and Thompson

Also present: Donna Buckner, Attorney Rachel Jackson, Chief Tracey Worlds, Superintendent Johnie Ford, Sergeant Herbert Gwynn, Superintendent Scott Nelson and Superintendent Mike Allmand

Vistors: David Cove, Larry and Teresa Trosper, Earl and Cindy Anderson, Reese Gaines, Ian Culver, Samuel Wiggins, Brenda and Dan Douglas, Ron Goforth, Memory Gaines, Olivia McCorkle, Maurice Gaines, Cameryn Anderson, Nathan Anderson, Mike Moore, Jenny Gaines, Norman Hendren, Paige Hendren, Danny Hartsfield, Saundra Whiteside, Shirley Spiller, Tim Ward, Rachel Grear, Khylee Frazier, Tanner Wakefield, Morgan Wakefield, Nichole Campbell, Caitlin Barker, J.C. Bonds, Zina Stuckey, Bertina Harris, Joshua Moses, Robin and Chuck Porter, Jon Pavletic, Jay Heath, Alice McCoy, Larry McCoy, Will Douglas, Tyson Weller, Chanty Weller, Monta C. Frazier, Sr., Marlon Holloway and Marcus Keeley

- The city's intent to exceed the \$1.8981 certified property tax rate. FY 2026-2027 budget will require a tax levy of \$2.20 per \$100 of assessed valuation

Discussion

Meeting adjourned 5:15 p.m.

Donna Buckner, Recorder

Craig Fitzhugh, Mayor

July 6, 2026

5:30 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, Chief Tracey Worlds, Superintendent Johnie Ford, Parks Director Lee Johnston, Superintendent Scott Nelson, Superintendent Mike Allmand, Chief Mitchell Turner and Sergeant Herbert Gwynn

Visitors: David Cove, Larry and Teresa Troser, Earl and Cindy Anderson, Reese Gaines, Ian Culver, Samuel Wiggins, Brenda and Dan Douglas, Ron Goforth, Memory Gaines, Olivia McCorkle, Maurice Gaines, Cameryn Anderson, Nathan Anderson, Mike Moore, Jenny Gaines, Norman Hendren, Paige Hendren, Danny Hartsfield, Sandra Whiteside, Shirley Spiller, Tim Ward, Rachel Grear, Khylee Frazier, Tanner Wakefield, Morgan Wakefield, Nichole Campbell, Caitlin Barker, J.C. Bonds, Zina Stuckey, Bertina Harris, Joshua Moses, Robin and Chuck Porter, Jon Pavletic, Jay Heath, Alice McCoy, Larry McCoy, Will Douglas, Tyson Weller, Chanty Weller, Monta C. Frazier, Sr., Marlon Holloway and Marcus Keeley

Invocation: Scott Nelson

Pledge of Allegiance

1. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Long to approve June 1, 2026 minutes as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye.
2. Motion by Alderman Frazier and second by Alderman Alston to approve June 2026 financial statement as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye.

Correspondence: none

Mayor's comments

- Introduction of Mike Moore as the new Downtown Development Director
- State Route 19 update
- Lauderdale High Alumni Association read excerpts of the Declaration of Independence on court square on July 4th

3. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Frazier to approve department reports as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye.
4. Motion by Alderman Keeley and second by Alderman Alston to re-appoint Tonia Garrison to Ripley Gas, Water and Wastewater Board 5-year term July 2026-June 2031 as recommended by Ripley Gas, Water and Wastewater Board. All aye.

Public comments:

Mr. Nathan Anderson addressed the board with concerns regarding CleanSpark (i.e. noise, rate increases, power capacity and water consumption, environmental and industry impact) and asked the board to place a moratorium on the project until such concerns can be addressed.

Superintendent Mike Allmand was asked to address concerns posed by Mr. Anderson. He stated the initial start-up of CleanSpark would require very few employees. Water usage would be sink water, toilet water – it's mineral water that's used for cooling. Being close to the schools is a good thing because you won't have to take the kids far to see what the future looks like. This is what the future looks like. Everything we do in this country today comes from data centers. If we, in this country, don't embrace this kind of technology, our hospitals and everything else won't be able to operate. This deal with CleanSpark will help us stabilize our rates. It will protect us from anything adverse.

Mr. Anderson asked what guarantees is this company providing the community. We're not asking to stop the project but asking to postpone it to allow time to get answers. The public deserves that. You also can't guarantee power rates because we know, from all the news media, that power is going to be king. It's going to drive the industry.

Mr. Allmand stated he could not guarantee tomorrow. No one in here can guarantee rates. That's TVA. They can raise the rates. They can do what they want to. That's not going to change.

Mr. Anderson asked even with the revenue that's generated from this project, how can we speculate what that revenue is going to be just based off of past predictions when we know it's going to keep going up.

Mr. Allmand stated that if our revenue goes up and our residential usage goes down, which all utilities have been for the last 10 years, it actually supports and help us. I can't tell you that we will never have a rate increase but I can tell you that this is the best thing we have ever had to help insulate our customers from a rate increase.

Mr. Anderson asked about the capacity from TVA. We only have so much land there. We have actual residents that live right around that area as well as our schools.

Mr. Allmand stated as far as capacity; #1 there has to be a rate study. CleanSpark has to pay TVA for a rate study which tells you whether you have enough capacity or not. Ripley is fortunate enough to have extra capacity which is how we were able to attract this industry when our neighbors could not.

Mr. Anderson stated it's not really bringing real jobs.

Mr. Allmand stated we need to realize that if it were bringing 200 jobs it would be competing with the Halls project that's going to have trouble finding 285 jobs plus it would be trying to take the jobs from the industry we already have. The third part of this project, which I can guarantee won't happen at this point, would have brought in 100-150 jobs making over \$100,000 a year. Again, the point is we have the capacity and if we didn't, TVA wouldn't let us have it. The second point is, if it requires a lot more capacity than we have at this site, this company pays for it. That doesn't happen in other companies. The company in Halls is not paying for it. It's coming from the rate payers. This industry, over time, will bring other industry with it. It brings revenue. Over a billion dollars in investment. Just the personal property tax ought to almost be over a couple million dollars a year for the city and the county.

Mr. Anderson stated he just doesn't understand what's wrong with wanting more time to consider this. Bring in some experts – a third party.

Mr. Allmand stated here's the deal. It's as simple as we need them a whole lot worse than they need us. They do have options and can go somewhere else. They want to be in a community that wants them there. They have cost us less than any other industrial customer that has ever come to the city or county.

Mr. Anderson stated that if it's such a great deal why wouldn't they stay? There will be other opportunities for data centers.

Mr. Allmand stated that industrial park out there has been growing corn and beans for the last 29 years and if we don't pass this, it can grow corn and beans for the next 29 years because you are not going to see another opportunity like this. These people up here (the board) get to consider the request for more time. I don't get to make that call.

Mayor Maurice Gaines stated he does agree with the timestamps. You and I have been frustrated with the city as it stands now because I've asked for the last few months: how many people are employed; how much power is it going to use; what's it going to cost residents; what is the decimal limit of sound coming from it. All these things CleanSpark, from what I understand, said they would provide but have not provided yet. So, I don't see why it would be an issue to wait another month and get all that information and then make an informed decision. The problem with the power is, evidently, TVA and Ripley Power and Light are not on the same page. They are telling us that there is a possibility that Aluko in Halls may have to pay \$20-30 million dollars because CleanSpark is sucking all the power from a company that is providing jobs. That's what the email said. Mike, you got the same email. I never got a response from you on that email.

Mr. Allmand stated you never sent me an email as a reason.

Mayor Gaines stated you never responded to Aluko.

Mr. Allmand stated the point is that before Aluko ever came up, ever came to this county,

CleanSpark had turned in their power study. They already had their study. There was no idea that there was such a thing as Aluko. I kept asking TVA, have they finished their power study.

Mayor Gaines stated so Aluko started in April. CleanSpark started before then?

Mr. Allmand stated yes, they started before TVA passed the policy that you had to pay \$20,000 to do a study, which was in March actually.

Mayor Gaines stated that when Aluko came to this locale, you were there at one of the first meetings, and assured them that you could provide the power that they needed. Now their coming back and fussing at us because they may have to spend \$10-20 million dollars to get the power they were promised by Ripley Power and Light. I had a meeting with Mayor Fitzhugh a while back because I was hoping we could get all of this settled prior to that. But you made a commitment that there was enough power there for Aluko. You also made a commitment that there was another 7 megawatts in Halls available to the other site. I don't know about Ripley because Ripley doesn't allow the county to get involved in their industrial recruitment.

Mr. Allmand stated you are mixing up two different things here. I said exactly that Ripley Power and Light had the capacity at the Tupperware substation to serve Aluko with 20 megawatts. It says that in their contract. You're right, I made that commitment. I don't run TVA. They have to do a power study to know that's the only way that Aluko gets the power they need. From what I understand, I'm not in the middle of it because I don't have anything to do with it, Aluko didn't finish their power study. When they did get it finished, that's where this number came up. It surprised me because we looked at our transmission line and substation and yes, I can tell everyone here we can serve up to 20 megawatts.

Mayor Gaines stated just the other day you sent an email saying you could serve another 7 megawatts to the other industrial site in Halls. So that means there's 27 megawatts up there.

Mr. Allmand stated there is, but I didn't say that. I said we would move that transformer from the other substation to double the size of the substation at Tupperware. We are going to do that. This board has already passed everything to get that done. We are ready. We are going to get it done. They won't be waiting on us. The TVA email had nothing to do with me.

Mayor Gaines asked why would they say that cost was going to be on them?

Mr. Allmand stated that was because of the power study. I don't agree with that either and I fussed with TVA and with new CEO at TVA. I don't like that. It's TVA's customer and they do need to do more for that. What they were also saying when they said that \$28.5 million, that's building a new 161 KV line all the way to Tupperware. If they require that then Ripley Power and Light is going to wind up spending \$8-10 million dollars to serve Aluko at that point because it changes the entire voltage and nothing we have there works. So, we are against it just as much as you are. We talked about the capacity we have at the substation. We're not the generator. We have no idea what ability they have to generate and that's why they have to do a study.

Mayor Gaines stated back to the original thing Board of Mayor and Aldermen, why would we not

hold this off one more month to try to get the appropriate information that everybody feels comfortable with. I don't feel comfortable because, I know I'm the county and I have nothing whatsoever to do with the city of Ripley's industrial property but I want to make sure we do what's right. You see all those turbine fans out there. We've asked, and I know CleanSpark has been directly asked what's the decimal rating. Just some of that information so that when they flip the switch and turn it on we don't have residents flooding in here.

Mr. Allmand stated they'll get that opportunity to actually witness it here.

Mayor Gaines stated in Jackson there is supposedly another site over there. When you step on the property you have to put in earplugs and supposedly they have the oil bath as well.

Mr. Allmand stated that the one you're hearing over there primarily is in a container. They don't do that anymore. The others, and some of the board went there and listened to it, is in an open-air building. This is different.

Mayor Gaines stated then why don't they put that in writing and tell us what the decimal rating is going to be. We talk about studies. A study on the impact on the surrounding community, a study on the impact on what it may do to the schools. We pay millions of dollars every year to do studies. I don't think one more would cause a problem.

Mr. Allmand stated that is up to these people (the board) but let me say really clearly, the building that's out there now, the company that's out there now, we have a 10-year commitment already signed. TVA has approved that. They (the board) can kill this project. I think the time delay between January 5th to now probably has killed all that so I don't think you have to worry about that pesky industry coming to your community. So, the thing is, we are going to have what we've got and we are fortunate to have that. They (the board) can wait a month, a year or six months. I honestly think this company is going somewhere else. So, that's good enough. I think that's why we are where we are.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated Mr. Allmand and myself have had discussions. The concepts looked good once I found out about it. It started with a 4-acre plot that CleanSpark wanted. Then it grew from there and they wanted 10 acres from our industrial park, then 20 acres from our industrial park which would have it right in the middle of it, which would have cramped the size of the industrial park back to where we were. We are still getting inquiries but we were getting a lot when Blue Oval was imminent. After that, the industrial board had a building that was not productive. Faist was in the building and not doing anything so the industrial board sold that building to CleanSpark which is an inside Bitcoin mining. It is data mining but it's a small area. I know people on this board have questions and I have questions as well. I have asked, personally, the government representative and the guy in charge of this on numerous occasions about the questions that are coming up. I've heard from Mr. Allmand and sometimes those answers aren't exactly what CleanSpark gives me. They say there's no water use there in this building so it won't be as loud. But they have not identified how loud it will be. There's also other things that use turbines and their own power generation. A lot of those are going to that but that wouldn't be the case in this building that we have. That causes a hum that people get tired of. They've indicated to us that won't happen either but they've not given anything in writing. Those are the things that have been

asked and we've been told we will get answers to those things. We have a lawyer working on that for us who specializes in this. We haven't heard back from CleanSpark yet. However, they are here and I think they will make good customers for us now because we have a \$1.6 million transformer that we're not doing anything with that we can hook right up to the extended substation. Now Tennessee law provides that we can't pay for that. Ripley Power and Light can't pay for that. So, the \$5 million that's coming up tonight is going to be paid by CleanSpark if they go through with what they are doing.

Mr. Allmand stated that's a Silicone Ranch expense. Not a CleanSpark expense.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated that because of the sale of the building by the IDB, we are at least going to have some revenue produced. It's not data mining to the extent we all have read about. At this stage of the game, we have committed that the building is theirs and can use it as long as they meet our zoning requirements and we have a written contract. We would never do anything like this without a binding contract. Going forward is where the uncertainty becomes because this board agreed to sell them the 130 acres that includes the buffer for the size of what they want to do but it was totally dependent on getting answers to these questions and getting answers from TVA on whether they would allow this. That's where we are now. We will not take a step and never said we would until we get those assurances. Not just from telephone conversations. We even had the government regulation guy in here last week and he told us all that. They would still want to do it but this board voted not to until we get these things answered. So, Mr. Anderson, we are in a holding pattern until we get those answers.

Alderman Alston asked if we could get someone from CleanSpark come in and tell us what's going on?

Mayor Fitzhugh stated he had asked that instead of going through Mr. Allmand who is our technical person. He's our superintendent for this and has been since 2014 when he retired. But we need facts from people who can put it down in writing and we've not gotten that. That's been our position all along.

Attorney Jackson stated that if you all remember Mr. Mamantov, who appeared via zoom for you all in the meeting before last, urged you all to slow walk this. He had the very same concerns that the public is expressing tonight. Mayor Fitzhugh and I went to the most recent meeting of the industrial development board. We said some fairly unpopular things at the industrial development board meeting in saying the city needs to do its due diligence. The city needs to walk slowly through this process. The city needs to make sure it has all its questions answered. There were those on the development board who were not happy that we were not expediting this and there were others there who were very unhappy to be hearing from Mayor Fitzhugh and I that the city intended to do its due diligence. But, when you have the expert, Mr. Mamantov, who expressed those same cautions to the development board, appeared to this board saying "it is only in your best interest and the city's best interest to slow walk this and have all the answers to all your questions". Not to just have someone from CleanSpark appear, but to have commitments in writing before you even consider it. That's more important than any appearance could ever be. They can come and tell you anything they want to tell you, but having a commitment in writing is an entirely different creature. IDB did not place itself in the kind of position that the city needs to place itself in in

doing its due diligence in making sure all of these questions are answered and that its citizens are represented and that their interests are attended to. As previously stated, we made an appearance and said some very unpopular things. Things that Mr. Allmand didn't like hearing from us and some things that Mr. Jackson didn't like hearing from us. The mayor and I have assured IDB that this city board would not do anything without having answers to its questions.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated this property is owned by the city board. There is a difference there from the IDB. In my opinion, from the research I've done and listened to others, we are in a position now where we're waiting on them for some concrete written answers to see if we want to go any further than we already have.

Alderman Fraizer stated we should give them a timeline. We've already given them 6 months by now.

Mayor Fitzhugh stated Mr. Allmand will agree that they were in a big hurry to come and go. They never told me that. They told me "no, we'll work with you, we know you have problems". They say they want to be good citizens and I'm sure they do. They are a legitimate company. We checked that part of it out, too. But to do this and not be any jobs to speak of, because it's all computers that run all the time. When they first started doing them, they made a lot of noise but apparently now they don't. It's not going to happen tomorrow for sure or in a month. We won't get those answers by then. At this stage of the game, we have located them and they own the building. They bought it for \$3.6 million. That right there will give us a substantial revenue. Ripley Power and Light has to pay the city a portion of the revenue they receive. Revenue in which we need now. We are all for Aluko because it's the one that has the jobs and many of those will come from Ripley. So, it could be a package deal if it worked out above board and give certain things for Ripley and certain things for Halls and a combined positive for each and every one of us. Don't think we're going out there tomorrow and sign something because we're just not ready for that. I don't think any member of this board is whether you voted for or against it in the past.

Mr. David Cove asked who pays for the modifications to allow both companies to operate and who pays for the continuous electricity to these two companies? Was it in the negotiations and are the citizens required to help with it or are the industries responsible for the full cost of it? How long will it take if we do have to spend the money to make them operable to get a return on the investment we're putting in?

Mayor Fitzhugh stated the law says, as of April, it's illegal for us, the city and the city owns Ripley Power and Light to pay for any of the expenses for these centers. We have not paid anything. They will pay all costs for everything they do and they have done that so far.

Mr. Allmand stated that is for the data center. As for Aluko in Halls, our customers will pay about a half of a million dollars to serve that industry. The return on investment will be over the term of the contract minimum. If they leave before 10 years, they have to pay us every penny of what we've spent. Even though CleanSpark came before this law, we may have spent \$5,000. The transformer we purchased prior to them even being here, they pay us every month for that. If Aluko leaves tomorrow, they have to pay us. We've arranged it where our customers are not at risk on either one.

Mr. Cove asked if the customers are not at risk, but we're investing \$500,000 to get Aluko up and running, are part of Aluko utilities partially subsidized or will they be responsible for all of it?

Mr. Allmand stated they are responsible for all of it. They have a deal with TVA on the first up to two years on a start-up testing rate. So, the margin will be cleaner but it will be best for them and least cost for them. After that, they will go up to where ever they are 14 or 20 megawatts.

Mr. Cove asked is there a fund that absorbs the \$500,000 instead of it coming in a rate increase?

Mr. Allmand stated it won't be a rate increase. We'll generate enough income to stabilize our rates to where there wouldn't be a rate increase unless TVA raises the wholesale rates. We do have a say in trying to minimize any effect it has on our customers.

Mayor Fitzhugh asked what is the \$500,000 for?

Mr. Allmand stated that's for Aluko. CleanSpark has paid for everything. They are the easiest and best company we've ever dealt with. They came in and asked for no tax abatement so they go on our tax role. It's a benefit in every avenue that I've looked at.

Alderman Frazier introduced youth entrepreneur Joshua Moses and purposed consideration for a Youth Entrepreneur Summer Permit Program.

5. Motion by Alderman Frazier and second by Alderman Alston to approve proposed Youth Entrepreneur Summer Permit Program contingent upon Attorney Jackson's findings regarding age discrimination conflicts. All aye.
6. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Frazier to approve application for off-premises beer permit for Gita Babulal Patel d.b.a. Ripley Store, Inc., 474 S. Washington Street, Ripley, TN 38063. All aye.
7. Motion by Alderman Frazier and second by Alderman Keeley to table items 13 and 14 until next meeting and until financials are received as requested from Ripley Power and Light. All aye.
8. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Thompson to approve resolution that the city's FY 2026-2027 budget will require a tax levy of \$2.20 per \$100 of assessed valuation exceeding the certified tax rate of \$1.8981. Roll call. Alston, Chipman, Keeley, Long, Thompson and Fitzhugh – aye. Frazier – nay. Motion carried.
9. Motion by Alderman Keeley and second by Alderman Alston to approve resolution to authorize application for the DRA Community Infrastructure Fund Program. Roll call. All aye.
10. Motion by Alderman Thompson and second by Alderman Long to accept Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury report on debt obligation for \$1,000,000 debt issue presented.

Roll call. All aye.

Meeting adjourned 6:45 p.m.

Donna Buckner, Recorder

Craig Fitzhugh, Mayor