



**Rotary**  
Club of Jackson,  
Mississippi



## **Rotagram**

**June 9, 2025**

The Rotary Club of Jackson welcomed **Jackson Mayor-Elect John Horhn**.

His talk was titled “**Jackson – A New Beginning.**”



**L to R:** Past President LeRoy Walker, Jr., Retired - LTM Enterprises, Inc. – Member since October 2014; Jackson Mayor-Elect John Horhn; President Phillip Carpenter – Rotary President; Owner, Carpenter Properties – Member since November; and Tina Clay, City of Jackson Ward 2 Council – Member since August 2015

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**A MOMENT OF SILENCE** in remembrance of our friend and former Rotarian, Owen Lusk, was held at the beginning of our meeting.

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**Rotary President Phillip Carpenter welcomed Rotarians and guests. He also led the Club in the Four Way Test.**

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**Michael Van Velkinburgh** delivered the Invocation.

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**Dean Jim Rosenblatt** led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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**Robby Toombs** introduced our visitors:

**Visiting Guests:**

- Phillip Blaylock's guest – Jonathan Waide, Wealth Management, Regions Bank
- Dr. Deborah Wright's guest – Dr. Georgine Felder, Director of Operations, Sincere Home Care LLC
- Danny Williams' guest – Tommy Herzog, Director, MS Bureau of Investigations
- Seth Dickenson's guest – Brad Tisdale, CPA, BT Advisors
- LeRoy Walker's guest – Willie Jones, President, DSC

**Visiting Rotarian:**

- Rob Whitley, North Jackson Rotary Club
- Frank "Mac" Youngblood, Rotary Club of Villa Real de Tegucigalpa in Honduras. His daughter, Amelia, also visited.

Mac Youngblood is a native of Jackson and is a full-time missionary. He is also the outgoing president of the Rotary Club Villa Real de Tegucigalpa in Honduras. The Rotary Club was asked by Honduran authorities to help create a sustainable, long-term water project that will provide water to 110 homes and a school, benefiting more than 400 people. They are seeking Global Grant partners to provide basic necessities for this community.

Click here for more information:

[Global Grant with Villa Real de Tegucigalpa](#)

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Harvey Little	June 10
Wilfred Beal	June 10
Steven Corbitt	June 11
David McMillin	June 11
Thomas Dunbar	June 12
Hugh Trussell	June 18

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## **ROTARY JOIN DATE:**

David Raddin     6/17/1980   45 Years

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## **WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:**

Heber and Sister Simmons	June 15	67 Years
George and Tamara Gammon	June 16	34 Years

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**\*\*NO MEETING on June 16 in observance of Juneteenth\*\***

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Leroy Walker will introduce Mayor-elect John Horhn.

John A. Horhn is an American politician who is the mayor-elect of Jackson, Mississippi. He has served in the Mississippi State Senate from the 26th district since 1993. He is a Democrat. He served as state tourism director from 1989 to 1992.

He was the Democratic nominee in the 2025 Jackson mayoral election, which he would go on to win after securing over 67% of the vote.

John was born on February 8, 1955, in Goodman, Mississippi. His father, Charlie, was a labor organizer with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and his mother, Willistene, worked as a cafeteria worker in a public school. His family moved to Jackson when he was three weeks old. He first grew up in Midtown before moving to Georgetown, where he later spent much of his formative years. He attended Morrison Elementary School, where he served as president of his class. He graduated from the Jackson Public School system.

He received a Bachelor of Arts in English and dramatic arts from Centre College in 1977 and later served as a trustee for the college. He studied at Jackson State

University and Duke University through their leadership programs.

John worked as a job developer for the A. Philip Randolph Institute from 1978 to 1980. He then worked as the executive director for the Mississippi Cultural Arts Coalition from 1980 to 1981. Afterward, he joined the Mississippi Arts Commission as a program manager from 1981 to 1985. He became the state film commissioner in 1985 and served in that position until 1988. Starting in 1988, he worked under Governor Ray Mabus as the director of federal-state programs. In 1989, he became Mississippi's tourism director, holding that position until 1992.

He organized the Mississippi Blues Commission in 1991 to map important blues sites in Mississippi and later co-sponsored legislation in 2004 to make it an official part of state law. Since 2011, John has served as vice chairman of the Mississippi Blues Foundation, an organization created by the commission.

A Democrat, he has served as a state senator since 1993, representing parts of Hinds and Madison counties. In the Mississippi State Senate, he served as chair of the Economic Development Committee.

For over 12 years, John has chaired the Senate Economic Development Committee. And sponsored, as well as helped to pass, over \$1 billion in projects in our facility in our city, as well as our state, for public facilities, hotels, museums, and water and sewer improvements.

John is married and has two children. He is a member of the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc.

This is his fourth time running for Mayor of Jackson, and it was not something he had planned to do. He said that more and more people from all walks of life, two or three times a day, every day, for the last couple of years, would come up to him, no matter where he was and what town he was in, and say to him that he should run again.

His team started conducting polls, focus groups, and social work. Based on this, they didn't know who the next mayor would be, but they knew that the data showed the incumbent had about a 15 percent chance of being re-elected.

They saw that John Horne's numbers were really good, and still, he wasn't convinced. He started praying about joining the election, but he hadn't told his wife yet. She had told him that the third run was their last. His pastor came to him and told him he had to run for mayor. John said, "No, I'm not." The pastor told him that the Lord wanted him to run.

Encouragement from neighbors, friends, relatives, and people on the street was what

convinced his wife, as she wasn't just hearing it from him.

The rest is history, but before they made the announcement, they put this race in God's hands. And they felt that they had God's favor in the race. If it were His will, then he would be the next mayor.

They knew they would have to do the required work and work harder than they ever had. He has a genuine appreciation for the team they put together and for their success in this race. John said he is so blessed by the folks who worked on the campaign. There were a lot of volunteers, people who did it because they love Jackson and want to see the city improve. He said he just finished 11 months of the most challenging work he had ever done in his life.

And now, of course, the real work begins, and a new beginning is now needed.

He believes that God has blessed him with certain experiences, expertise, and relationships that can benefit this city and our community. He knows that he can help turn Jackson, Mississippi, around. John said he has always been one who likes to build bridges between people rather than always hanging out with those he already knows; he'd rather go and meet someone he has never met before. He has always enjoyed developing relationships in this manner.

Seeing what is needed in terms of the challenges in Jackson, he knows that the many relationships, acquaintances, and deep friendships that he has made over the years will stand him in good stead as they travel on this next leg of their journey and help to turn our city around.

Three key steps must be taken before discussing economic development: addressing out-migration and attracting people to the city. Most importantly, it is to establish trust and accountability. John said that Jackson had lost the confidence of its bosses, the taxpayers. Many taxpayers have a bad attitude about the current inaction in building our city government.

When people call City Hall, they often don't have a positive experience. They know that they have to get folks to trust their government again.

Trusting from the standpoint of believing that there's going to be as much corruption and bad dealings as possible. But also trusting that government officials will do what they say they're going to do. You will need to provide the basic services, in addition to establishing trust and accountability, so that people can once again rely on having their basic needs met.

There's an expectation that you're not going to tear your car up in potholes, that crime

is going to be diminished, and that people are going to be safe in the city, whether they're at home or away from home.

The third step is to put a plan of action in place. The saying that if you don't know where you're going, then any road will take you there that's Jackson right now.

There isn't a comprehensive plan in place, and for that reason, we are subject to the vagaries of the wind. If we come up with a plan of action, John thinks it'll cut down on the bickering among our city council members and between them and the mayor.

John said that if we do these things, if we deal with trust and accountability, not just trust in accountability with our taxpayers, but also trust in the accountability of our government partners, including the county, state, and federal governments. Right now, there isn't that relationship.

But on day one, he's going to sign an interlocal agreement with the county that says it is willing to come into Jackson and help pave roads and build bridges.

On day one, the Mayor's office will begin working on a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

John gave an example with the state; the Capital Police was established with additional authority in House Bill 1020, and contained in House Bill 1020 is also a requirement that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be established by the city, along with the support of the state Department of Public Safety and the Capitol Police. Jackson is supposed to say, "Here's what we expected the delineation of responsibilities and duty should be as it relates to the relationship we have with the Capitol Police."

John said he already has a good relationship with the police department, including Chief Wade, as well as Tyree Jones, our sheriff, and Bo Lucky, our head of Capital Police. He said those relationships can only be improved if that document is put in place. An example of how stuff can go wrong if you don't have an understanding is the aftermath of the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Folks stood down when somebody should have been standing up, and continued to stand up. We need to consider the "what ifs" so that we can keep our citizens as safe as possible.

Regarding our water and wastewater system, we must demonstrate that we can effectively manage our assets. This city has the necessary staffing, leadership, vision, and capability to manage its own business effectively. Additionally, our airport is a notable example. Those assets are in danger of being lost right now, and some of it is because we've not demonstrated our ability to manage those assets in the last few years in a way that most people would find admirable.

John's job is not to give away assets but to try to preserve them, but only if we have the capability, the staffing, and the talent that will allow us to do that and do it well.

These are the things that he's going to focus on right away.

A forensic audit with a company from outside the area is needed right away because he has heard too many stories about how our city's finances are in a bad way, and there are truly questionable things that may not have happened. They want to make sure that they clear up anything that's not something that was inherited. In the midst of all this, he must work on the budget for 2026.

Another thing is determining how quickly and how effectively we can regain our bond rating. The city doesn't have a bond rating right now. It has been pulled because of a lack of audits being submitted as required by law.

But where do we go with Jackson? The only place to go is up. This city has tremendous assets. It has immense talent. It boasts enormous human resources, impressive architecture, a rich culture, and a strategic geographical location. And yet, we're not maximizing our efforts in a way that allows us to be as great as we could be.

John said another thing on his list is to do a Market Value Analysis. Is the city too big now? It was built for 250,000 people, but it now has only 144,000. Do we need to right-size Jackson in terms of traffic lights? Considering the parts of the city that require infrastructure maintenance, are there some that we can convert into parks or return to their natural state? Those are some things that we've got to start thinking about in this city.

The Market Value Analysis data will reveal some of the opportunities and their locations. That data will help the city begin the process of creating a comprehensive plan, which will involve every neighborhood, subdivision, and community around the city, and utilize that data to chart a new direction for Jackson.

John said he believes in the One Lake Project. He thinks that it can make Jackson a destination. They should be doubling down on research, especially in collaboration with the Department of Defense and our local Historically Black College or University (HBCU), Jackson State University. The work that the city is doing in that effort is something that John wants to continue.

We need to determine the future of the zoo: whether to close it, relocate it, or invest in making it a significantly better institution than it is currently. Is a sports plex a part of our future? I don't know, but he's willing to look at it if the feasibility study says it's a good idea here.



So, we've got to start thinking about these things and figuring out who we want to become, what we're going to become, and how we're going to get there. We're not going to be up there without us. We've got to believe in Jackson once again. John said that he thinks all the people sitting in the dining room at the Rotary meeting believe in Jackson, and that's why we're still sitting in this room.

John believes that everybody who could get out of Jackson has gotten out of Jackson by now. So, the folks that are still here need to double down on making this the great city that we know it can be. And they're ready to work together.

We're ready to forget about the divisions of race, about financial gaps in the divisions, about cultural differences that we have.

One thing that we do have in common is our love of Jackson, and he thinks we ought to get to work on demonstrating that love.



Past President LeRoy Walker, Jr., Jackson Mayor-Elect John Horhn, President Phillip Carpenter, Tina Clay, and Ashby Foote





Deonte Oscar and Steve Cook



Dr. Heber Simmons and Hap Henley



Sharon Moman and Michael Booker



Amelia & Mac Youngblood and Dent Anglin





Tamica Jeuit and Mike Pepper



Robby Toombs