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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE August 4, 2025

On July 16, 2025, shortly before noon, Patrol Officer Jeremy L. Harris was enroute to the Lowndes County Jail to assist with the jailing of a difficult suspect. He had his blue lights and sirens on and was traveling at a high rate of speed, headed easterly on College Street. At or about the same time, Devion Bankhead, operating a Dodge Avenger automobile, was stationary facing north at or near the stop sign at 22<sup>nd</sup> Street South where it intersects with College Street. Officer Harris' police vehicle and the Dodge Avenger collided, and Harris' vehicle turned over east of the intersection. The Lowndes County Sheriff's Department worked the collision and issued Mr. Bankhead citations for driving without a license and no proof of insurance. Mr. Bankhead, Officer Harris and occupants of the vehicle were taken to BMHGT for treatment.

Upon learning of the crash, Mayor Jones ordered the body-camera footage and reviewed it several times in real time and in slow motion, with the general counsel to the City and the Chief of Police. Mayor Jones then went to the scene with the general counsel and reviewed the scene. At that time, the Lowndes County Sheriff's Department had issued a crash report that found Officer Harris had no contributing action related to the crash, but that Mr. Bankhead failed to yield.

The narrative in the Uniform Crash Report prepared by the Sheriff's Department also said business owners located near intersection at the time of the crash said that Mr. Bankhead pulled out too far, causing the collision. While Mayor Jones was at the scene of the crash with the general counsel, Sheriff Eddie Hawkins pulled up to the intersection. Mayor Jones and the General Counsel told the Sheriff that, from their viewing of the body-camera video and where the vehicles ended up after the crash, they believed Mr. Bankhead's vehicle may have been stationary at the time of the collision. Thereafter, the Sheriff's department investigated further and revised the crash report finding that Mr. Bankhead's vehicle was stationary and that Officer Harris lost control of his vehicle.

The City's post-accident protocol provides that when City employees are taken to BMHGT after a vehicular accident the hospital shall promptly conduct a urinalysis for drugs and alcohol. However, the BMHGT Emergency Department staff member who had historically collected the samples for analysis had passed away and the staff was confused about what to do. BMHGT has since called the City's HR Director, apologized for the confusion and stated the hospital has conducted remedial training to ensure that in the future, prompt samples are collected for testing. The PD did not instruct the hospital not to collect a urine sample. When the PD discovered the failure, it promptly ordered Officer Harris to produce a sample.

The Mayor and Council are reviewing the Sheriff Departments 365-page report and will swiftly address any failures leading up to and arising out of the accident.