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**THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF DOWNTOWN JACKSON PARTNERS ISSUES THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT CONCERNING DOWNTOWN JACKSON PARTNERS PRESIDENT BEN ALLEN:**

From his service as a Jackson City Councilman to his leadership as President of Downtown Jackson Partners (DJP), Ben Allen has conducted himself with complete integrity and honesty. He has shown an unparalleled commitment to the city of Jackson and the Central Business District.

The charges lack any basis in fact and are instead an apparent effort to tarnish the reputation of one of Jackson's most dedicated and law-abiding public servants. This action is also a false indictment of the entire Downtown Jackson business and residential community that has worked tirelessly to transform and improve the Central Business District.

These allegations arise from a disgruntled former DJP employee who was found to have embezzled \$40,000 from the organization. Despite a criminal complaint filed last year with the Jackson Police Department by DJP and Trustmark National Bank, no action has been taken by the District Attorney to prosecute this former employee. In addition, a civil lawsuit against the former employee was filed last year in the County Court of Madison County by DJP to recover the embezzled funds.

DJP fully cooperated with an investigation and audit of its operations conducted more than a year ago by the Office of State Auditor, in which all requested documents were made available. At the same time, the DJP Board of Directors commissioned its own independent investigation and audit that found DJP and its staff to be in full compliance with all requirements, rules and laws.

The Executive Committee of Downtown Jackson Partners stands unanimously behind our President Ben Allen and intends not to simply defend against these baseless allegations, but to vigorously fight to ensure that Mr. Allen is fully cleared in this matter.

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Laura Lamar, *Chair*

Betsy Bradley

Hilda Stauss Owen, *Secretary*

Ramel Cotton

Leland Speed, *Chairman Emeritus*

Steve Davis, *Vice Chair*

Sylvia Stewart, *Treasurer*

Ted Duckworth

David Watkins, *Past Chair*

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