

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana  
December 10, 2024  
6:00p.m.

The Honorable Chairman Juanita G. Woods, called the meeting to order. She then asked the clerk to call roll.

There were present: Mrs. Ezernack, Ms. Woods, Mr. McFarland, & Mr. Muhammad

There was absent: Mr. Harvey

Chairman Woods announced that a quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance would be led by Mr. Muhammad or his designee.

The Invocation was led by Pastor Lenard Montgomery New Faith Missionary Baptist Church.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(1) Mrs. Ezernack said good evening and welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting. She thanked Pastor Montgomery for an inspiring invocation. She noted it was very well said, and they all took it to heart.

(2) Mr. McFarland acknowledged the Jr. Builders, and he stated he has four book boxes coming up next week. He said they are still trying to schedule a time at Barkdull Faulk Elementary, but all his presentations will be on Monday. He said the first one will be at Clara Hall at 9:00 am December 16<sup>th</sup>, Thomas Jefferson at 10:00 am, and J.S. Clark at 12:00 pm. He thanked everyone who exercised their right to vote on the election. He said stay focused on the main thing and recognize that the tax that was passed doesn't began until 2029.

(3) Mr. Muhammad thanked all the citizens that stood with the Council concerning the tax. He stated the tax passed 59 to 41 and they will continue to make sure citizen's tax money will be spent properly. He thanked District 5 and particularly those in South Monroe for taking time to vote. He thanked the community for attending the Community/Listening meeting at Prince Hall in King Oaks. He said it was well attended, and he thanked Mr. Louis Tolliver, Director of Public Works, for coming out. Lastly, he said the Administration have to be more transparent about murders and homicides in the City. He stated there was a homicide on Breece Circle and he got the information from the community. He said he had to verify it with the Police Department, and he thinks that it should be the other way around. He further stated they would put a resolution together that requires the Administration to report crime in the community. He said it's not reaching media or tv and the City has had three murders and one critical shooting in Oak Manor. He said the City has a crime problem, but they are going to require the Administration to begin to report to the Council what is going on.

(4) Chief Jimmie Bryant, Chief Operating Officer, sitting in for Mayor Friday Ellis noted there were no communications from the Mayor.

(5) Ms. Woods stated if your phones are on she is asking everyone to mute them at this time and kind of reframe from talking to their neighbor during the meeting. She announced her meet and greet that she does once a month; whether they need it or not, to bring people together to talk about what is on their minds and for her to listen. She said she brings someone from the Administration to have conversations and give them the opportunity to meet people in the community. She said the next meeting will be the Christmas holiday meet and greet December 19<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am until noon at the Powell Street Recreation Center. She said there is a toy drive that will be December 21<sup>st</sup> at the Powell Recreation Center, and it is an opportunity to help children who are less fortunate than others. On another note, she stated she has a challenge, her feelings are hurt, and she said she had a resident that was injured in the Powell Street Community Center parking lot. She said it has been about a week ago and she fell because of the holes in the parking lot. She said Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, assured her he was aware, and measures were going to be taken. She said she trust him because she believes in him. She said the thing that is most disturbing is that not only are the holes still there, but it's pitch black. She said you can fall because you can't see when you are walking to your car in the parking lot. She said the lady that fell was in her 70's and she fell on her hands and knees, and she had to go to the hospital. She noted the community centers are here for the community and when the community have events at the centers in the evening

there are no lights; it's problematic for the City. She said at the end of the day they have the liability that goes on with it because it is their parking lot. She said she is disturbed because one week later there are still no lights and she said even if they can't fix the parking lot someone should have called Entergy to have lights put up. She said in her mind that is unacceptable. She read into the minutes a statement:

#### A Message of Assurance and Commitment

As your Monroe City Council Chairlady, alongside Councilmen Rodney McFarland, Sr., and Verbon Muhammad, Sr., representing Districts 3, 4, and 5, we want to assure you that our commitment to fighting for the equal and fair distribution of funding for East and South Monroe remains unwavering.

While the recent tax proposal did pass without the necessary revisions we would have liked to have seen, please do not be dismayed. We recognize your concerns and stand firm in our resolve to collaborate on alternative strategies that will bring about the facelifts and improvements our districts deserve and so desperately need in comparison to other areas of Monroe. Our shared vision for the growth and prosperity of our communities remains at the forefront of our efforts.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who exercised their right to vote and stood firm in requiring revisions to ensure fairness and equity. Your voices have been heard, and your advocacy inspires us to push harder for what is right.

Please know that we are working tirelessly and diligently to explore innovative solutions that will benefit all our residents. Together, we will continue to strive for progress and positive change.

She noted it is with gratitude and determination that she, Juanita Woods Chairman of the Monroe City Council accept these responsibility and that is why her feelings are hurt. She said there is no reason why they haven't done something to that public facility. She questioned if they are waiting for the next person to fall, and her commitment is they are going to do the right thing. She yielded her remaining time to Mrs. Ellen Hill to announce upcoming events that she has planned for the City.

Mrs. Ellen Hill, Director of Planning and Urban Development, wanted the entire community to know on Thursday at 2:00 pm they are hosting a virtual public hearing. She said on the City's website go to community development and they will be able to click on the link that says click here to join the meeting. She said if for some reason members of the community can't join they will record the session. She noted they are in the process of gathering public comment for the HUD consolidated plan and every five years it allows them to engage the community in getting ideas and input on how they should invest the public dollars that HUD entrust the City with every year. She said the following week on Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm they are recruiting specifically landlords, and she said the funding they have through the lead hazard grant allows them to work on rental properties. She said they are looking for landlords who rent to families with young children for them to test for lead and other household hazards. She said it doesn't cost the landlord anything because the focus is on the family. She said they are looking for landlords with property in Monroe or in West Monroe adjacent to the community center who are interest in enrolling their property in this program. She said it will be at the Public Safety Center registration isn't required but they have to attend in order to sign up for the program.

Ms. Woods reiterated if you are living in somebody's rental property, and you need something done to that house that you are living in have your landlord go to this meeting. She said if you are a renter the City need you to encourage your landlords to go to this meeting because it will benefit them.

Mrs. Hill said it's for children six or younger whether they reside in the home or visit over the course 60 hours in a year. She said whether the child is related to you or not are eligible for this program.

Ms. Woods said if there is free money out there they definitely want to take advantage of that and if you know someone tell them to and pass the word.

Upon motion of Mr. McFarland and seconded by Mr. Muhammad, and the minutes of the Legal and Regular session of December 10, 2024, were unanimously approved. (There were no public comments.)

Presentation: Fiscal Year Audit Presentation Allen, Green, & Williams, LLP – Certified Public Accountants. The Chairman stated the audit presentation that was scheduled for this meeting will be rescheduled to the next City Council Meeting December 23, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. She further stated Mr. Green is under the weather and unable to be here tonight. She said they gave him the opportunity to reschedule and to keep him lifted up in prayer.

ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF BIDS:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8860 accepting the bid of Tom Meagher, Inc. d/b/a Guidry's Uniform for Monroe Fire Department uniforms and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Ezernack and unanimously approved to consider four (4) Renewal Applications for a New 2025 Class A Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved to consider one (1) Renewal Application for a New 2025 Class B Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no public comments.)

Department of Community Affairs:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8861 authorizing a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Free Me Association d/b/a Monroe City Academy League (MCAL) and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Ray Wright, Director of Parks and Beautification, noted he wanted to give the Council some numbers from what he has been seeing because he has had a chance to interact with them personally. He said football season they had roughly 900 athletics among all denominations. He said they have five hundred for basketball, 115 soccer athletes, campers, and 500 athletes cycled through the camps. He said this is the City property behind Carroll, Benoit, Saul Adler, and Powell. He said the purpose of culture is to drive the behaviors that win a team's culture isn't defined by words alone it's forced by the standards they set and the expectations they uphold this group does.

Mr. Tre Hunter piggybacked off of Mr. Wright and he said he definitely appreciated him, those who support the league, their Council persons, and the Administration. He said saving the youth from crime and underprivileged situations that a lot of them come from in the area is definitely a driving force. He said it is not just them being sports minded, but this is them literally them growing, grooming, and healing their community. He said the more they support and pass on the word the bigger and better they are going to get.

Mr. Tyree Hollins presented the City Council with MCAL merchandise that service each of their community centers in their districts.

Ms. Woods commended Mr. Hunter and Mr. Hollins on the seriousness of the work that they do because truly they are making a difference in the community. She said they are doing amazing work, and she appreciated the parents being involved as well.

Mr. Muhammad echoed Ms. Woods, and he stated he remembers when MCAL started and how they were coming here to sell the vision of what they wanted to do. He said he noticed they were persistent and didn't give up. He commended them for that, and he said these young people are an example where they can take their energy from out of these streets to what they all are doing.

Mr. McFarland noted he would echo the same and he said Mr. Hollins is doing an outstanding job. He said everyone who helps with the staff is excellent and he is more than happy that 3 of the Council will give \$2,000 out of their funds to the program. He said there was no second thought

whatsoever about doing that. He wanted to know if it is a conflict of interest with his seven year old being a part of MCAL.

Mr. Creekbaum noted participation in a generally accepted league is not a conflict.

Fire Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8862 authorizing the City of Monroe to apply for and accept an Assistance to Firefighters Grant from FEMA for positive pressure ventilation fans and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

RESOLUTION AND ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING AND FINAL ADOPTION AND SUBJECT TO PUBLIC HEARING:

Mr. Creekbaum stated for the record this Ordinance was amended at the last meeting to prohibit adult use as a condition of the zoning. He said that it was included in the revised ordinance in the packet. He said for anyone that watched the last meeting the ordinance before the Council tonight contains that restriction.

The Chairman Open the Hearing and seeing no on come forward the Hearing was Closed.

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,252 approving an application by Crest Construction to rezone certain property (5.47), amending the Zoning Map for the City of Monroe, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were public comments.)

Citizen's Participation:

(1) Ms. Brenda Joyce Williams, 502 Carlton Ave., said her concern is the area that she lives in. There are many overgrown, neglected properties, and slumlords and she said she has given the Council pictures and addressed showing dilapidated, burned houses, and buildings that are havens for squatters. She said she is pleased to see that wholesome bread thrift store has been torn down and her concern is how long the debris is going to still be on the parking lot. She noted there are also rotting trees hanging over Lee Avenue, South Grand, and Jackson Street that need to be cut down and vines hanging across streets from the utility poles and curbs with dirt build up. She further noted the median on Lee Avenue use to have signs that said no parking in the median most of those signs are all gone. She said the sidewalk signs that say no parking on the sidewalk people are totally ignoring that and she thought the City had a least two new street sweepers, but she doesn't see them anywhere. She stated her and husband see a lot of neglect because they clean ditches, pick up paper, put ribbons on poles for Entergy to turn the lights back on, they call to get stop signs put back up, and they turn in the vandalized signs to engineering. She further stated she is willing to sit down with any Council person to share ideas and she would appreciate her Council member getting back in touch with her to share with them some of these things and work forward.

Mr. McFarland stated every picture Mrs. Williams gave him he gave it to Mr. James who is working on it. He said they identified quite a bit, and they have to follow the law. He said anytime after December 16<sup>th</sup> if Mrs. Williams want to meet with him he would be glad to. He thanked Mr. James and the Public Works Director Louis Tolliver for doing an outstanding job. He said they are addressing all of their concerns and if there are some more concerns he would be glad to work on them with her.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if there was an ordinance for parking on the sidewalks and medians.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, said the City have a whole section in the Code of Ordinance that deal with parking. He said off the top of his head he knows there are some about parking and impeding the flow of traffic extending out beyond curb lines. He said if those are all there he imagines obstructing the flow of public and pedestrian traffic is likely there.

(2) Mr. Jerry Gaston, 139 Betty Dr., stated he came before the Council a while back about his DJ equipment. He said Mr. Creekbaum said he would call the police to have them investigate and he wanted to know if he has.

Ms. Woods said she knows Mr. Gaston and Mr. Creekbaum had conversations and she is aware of this, but she never got any information on the resolve on it.

Mr. Creekbaum stated he told Mr. Gaston he needed the information from him about the value of the equipment and he hasn't heard a word from Mr. Gaston since they met in his office.

Mr. Gaston stated Mr. Creekbaum told him in his office that there is nothing the City can do because Mr. Wright told Mr. Creekbaum that it wasn't the City's box. He further stated he is going to get a lawyer to sue the City.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if Mr. Gaston have the receipts and get them to Mr. Creekbaum then they can start the process over.

Mr. Gaston stated he doesn't have his receipts.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if he could give an estimated value because a lot of times people don't keep receipts.

Mr. Creekbaum said he is not going to discuss this in a public meeting because of the City's potential liability and he discussed that in length to Mr. Gaston He said he can't evaluate a whole circumstance if he doesn't have all the information to evaluate.

(3) Ms. Kenya Roberson, Northeast Louisiana Black Chamber of Commerce, announced on Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. the Annual State of the Chamber Address at the Monroe Civic Center. She noted they will be installing their new board for the new year, the judges will swear them in, and there will be entertainment as well. She thanked the Council for being supportive as well as assisting them this year. She said they look forward to a great 2025 and collaborative endeavors with the City of Monroe as well as their Council persons for 2025.

(4) Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, said she has to remember she is in a new role. She publicly apologized to Mr. Doug Harvey because she did attack him in a public conversation. On another note, she said there is game at Chennault Park called disc golf, and she invited the Council to come out on Saturday at 1 o'clock to see how they can get this game going for the community.

(5) Mr. Kortlan Nelson, 1413 South Second St., said concerning Forsythe Park he noticed that there's a lot of construction going on. He said it is his understanding the City will be doing more of this at the others parks too. He said he is unhappy about them building parking lots at the park and covering the grass. He said the second thing is the swimming pool at Forsythe Park is unfortunately the pool has been filled in with dirt. He said third thing he wanted to bring to the Council attention Neville High School is recognized as the most beautiful public high school in the State of Louisiana Architectural Digest. He said several things have come up about tearing down the school and building a low cost school to maintain. He said he doesn't know if there is anything the Council can do about that, but he think it would be a tragedy.

Mr. Muhammad stated he never heard anything about it being torn down and the Monroe City School Board has put to much money into it.

There being no further business to come before the council, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Ms. Juanita G. Woods  
Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley  
Council Clerk

Ms. Ileana Murray  
Staff Secretary

For extended details on the council meeting please call the Council Clerk Monday-Friday at 318-329-2252 to schedule an appointment to listen to the minute recording.