

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
December 13, 2022
6:00p.m.

There was a legal and regular session of the City Council of the City of Monroe, Louisiana held this date at the Council's regular meeting place, the Council Chamber, City Hall Building, Monroe, Louisiana.

The Honorable Chairman Kema Dawson, called the meeting to order. She then asked the clerk to call roll.

There were present: Mr. Harvey, Mrs. Ezernack, Ms. Woods, Mr. Marshall & Mrs. Dawson

There was absent: None

Chairman Dawson announced that a quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance would be led by her designee.

The Invocation was led by Pastor Vance Price of Community Family of Faith Church.

Communications & Special Announcements:

Mr. Harvey thanked everyone for checking on him in his absence. He stated the amount of support he received was heartwarming, after his crash a couple weeks ago. He said he was assisted by all kinds of people including the Monroe Fire Department, and he is glad to be here. He said he wasn't going to let a small arm incident break tradition therefore he brought out the best fitting Christmas suit he had for tonight.

Mrs. Ezernack welcomed Mr. Harvey on tonight and she said the Council is thankful he is able to be here. She said she is wishing Mr. Harvey a full recovery. She expressed her condolences to Councilman Marshall on the loss of his sister. She said this is a rough time for him and his family. She asked everyone to keep Mr. Marshall and his family in their prayers. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Ms. Woods said good evening to everyone, and she said everyone looks beautiful on a Tuesday night with this pending storm. She welcomed Mr. Harvey back and she said God was definitely in the miracle working business for Mr. Harvey. She said if you saw any of those pictures, you know that was an awful crash. She said her prayers and condolences go to Mr. Marshall and she said her heart is heavy because last Council meeting, he was asking for prayers for his sister. She said now we are asking everyone to pray for his family and ask that God gives him strength as his family goes through this time. She wished everyone a Happy and Merry safe prosperous Christmas.

Mr. Marshall thanked everyone for their prayers and concerns. He said his sister is in a better place and she is no longer suffering. He said she was tired, and she fought a good fight. He welcomed Mr. Harvey back and thanked everyone for coming out to the Council meeting. He wished everyone a safe and Happy Holiday season. He said love on your family, life is a season itself, you never know when that day may come.

Mrs. Dawson welcomed Mr. Harvey back and she said they are happy he is back safe and healthy. She said our prayers are continuously with Mr. Marshall and she knows it is hard for him to be here on tonight. She thanked everyone for being in attendance and she said they will be sure to get everyone out before the storm hits.

Mr. Jimmie Bryant, Chief Operating Officer, setting in for Mayor Ellis had no comments from the Mayor on tonight.

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Marshall the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of November 22, 2022, were unanimously approved. Mr. Harvey abstain he was not present at the last meeting. (There were no public comments.)

PRESENTATION: Doug Mitchell, Executive Director North Delta Regional Planning & Dev. District Reapportionment Plan (Redistricting) (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Dawson stated there have been a couple community meetings to discuss the redistricting for the City of Monroe. She said she wanted everyone that attended those meetings that asked the Council to redraw another map to show how District 2 could be a majority or minority district that those maps were drawn. She noted they are available to show on tonight. She further noted Senator Jackson recommended all the maps be sent to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and they have had a couple meetings with them, one as recent as 2 o'clock today. She said they sent her a narrative from their discussions which she will read before Mr. Doug Mitchell comes to the podium. She stated from the narrative under Plan 5A, Districts 3, 4, and 5 will perform when the Mayoral race is at the top of the ballot which majority of the Council selected. She said the minority choice candidates in each of those elections will be successful and District 4 in particular, under Plan 5A would be successful for the minority choice candidate with about 65% of the vote, assuming that the Mayor's race is also on the ballot. She said with a runoff they could not tell if the candidate would be successful because they had nothing to compare it to. She said they only had the numbers from 2020 because 2016 did not have any race because District 2 and District 4 people went in unopposed, and they couldn't compare those numbers. She said District 2 can not be made into a majority – Black district that will perform, given the low turn out of minority voters without affecting the minority percentages in Districts 3, 4, and 5. She stated the deviation in each district can't be greater than 10% and if District 2 were made into a majority -minority district it could potentially affect the population of the other districts. She said those maps were made and sent in for a second opinion. She said after Mr. Mitchell's presentation they are looking to have a community meeting because the community wants to see the maps outside of the Council meeting. She said the only time they can have a meeting is tomorrow at 5pm because there are deadlines the Council has to meet.

Mr. Doug Mitchell, Executive Director North Delta Regional Planning & Dev. District, said he has worked with Mr. David Creed, and he has been a friend to this community for years. He said he started working with him doing redistricting using the traditional redistricting process of one man one vote compactness of districts and trying to avoid gerrymandering. He said the 2010 geography and the overlay of the 2020 census data District 2 is the largest District at 17% deviation with 1,642 people over the ideal value. He said District 4 is at a negative 17% deviation with 1,654 people below zero or the ideal value that puts the plan at 34% deviation. He said that from 2010 to 2020 the population has reduced from 48,815 in 2010 to 47,702 in 2020. He noted when going through the process of dividing the total population by the number of districts there was an ideal value of 9,540. He further noted in 2010 that number was 9,763 and in the year 2000 districts were 10,500 which shows a trend of population loss in the City of Monroe. He said they tried to move the district lines as little as possible to bring the population into deviation for Districts 3,4, and 5. He said the reason being District 3 was at a negative 5.4% deviation. He said pulling people out of District 3 into Districts 4 and 5 balanced the deviation. He presented photographic evidence of Plan 5A map to show which boundaries were moved to balance deviation in each District.

Proposed Condemnations:

The following condemnation was considered:

1. (3106 Gordon Avenue (D4) (Owner – Lawrence & Beatrice Green) Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. Tommy James, Code Enforcement Officer, stated he spoke with the property owner, and she is present at the Council meeting tonight. He said the property burned in April of 2022 and it is an open dilapidated structure. They are asking to give the property owner 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot.

Mr. Marshall stated he has spoken with the property owner, and he motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to remove any debris or noxious growth.

Resolutions and Minute Entries:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded, by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8404 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the City of Monroe and Free Me Association d/b/a Monroe City Academy League (MCAL) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Marshall seconded, by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to consider thirty-four (34) Renewal Applications for a new 2023 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. Marshall seconded, by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to consider fourteen (14) Renewal Applications for a new 2023 Class A Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded, by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to consider two (2) Renewal Applications for a new 2023 Class A Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no public comments.)

Department of Planning & Urban Development:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack seconded, by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8405 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into and execute an Agreement by and between the City of Monroe and Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) AHAYAH Community Development Corporation Inc., for the reconstruction of 3106 Jackson Street up to the amount of \$32,167.16 from the Home Investment Partnership Program (home) m-17-mc-22-0206, up to the amount of \$107,832.84 from the Home Investment Partnership Program (home) m-18-mc-22-0206, and up to the amount of \$25,000 from the Community Development Block Grant Program (cdbg) b- 21-mc-22-0005 and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. Marshall stated Christmas came early for Ms. Green.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded, by Ms. Ezernack and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8406 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into and execute an Agreement by and between the City of Monroe and Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) AHAYAH Community Development Corporation Inc., for the reconstruction of 4007 Curry Street up to the amount of \$85,806.26 from the Home Investment Partnership Program (home) m-19-mc-22-0206, \$76,193.74 from the Home Investment Partnership Program (home) m-20-mc-22-0206, and up to the amount of \$17,000 from the Community Development Block Grant Program (cdbg) b-21-mc-22-0005 and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded, by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8407 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into and execute an Memorandum of Understanding (contract) by and between the City of Monroe and Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) AHAYAH Community Development Corporation Inc., for the reconstruction of 2508 Renwick Street up to the amount of \$20,806.26 from the Home Investment Partnership Program (home) m-18-mc-22-0206 up to the amount of \$114,193.74, from the Home Investment Partnership Program (home) m-19-mc-22-0206, and up to the amount of \$20,000 from the Community Development Block Grant Program (cdbg) b-21-mc-22-0005 and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods said Ms. Ellen Hill, Director of Planning & Urban Development, and her group are doing an outstanding job. She said this project has been a long time coming and it is making a Merry Christmas for many people.

(d) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack seconded, by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8408 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into and execute an Agreement by and between the City of Monroe and Community Housing Development

Organization (CHDO) AHAYAH Community Development Corporation Inc., for the reconstruction of 508 Columbia up to the amount of \$140,000.00 from the Home Investment Partnership Program (home) m-18-mc-22-0206, and up to the amount of \$25,000 from the Community Development Block Grant Program (cdbg) b- 21-mc-22-0005 and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Engineering Services:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack seconded, by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8409 authorizing a designated city representative to advertise for bids on the Texas Avenue Lift Station to Standifer Avenue Lift Station – Sewer Main Repair/rehabilitation Project. The estimated cost of this project is \$7,117,010.83. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded, by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8410 authorizing the City of Monroe to advertise for bids for the Ruffin Drive Water System Improvements Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack seconded, by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8411 Mayor Friday Ellis to execute contract documents on behalf of the City of Monroe related to Phase I of the Kansas Lane Extension (Old Sterlington Rd. – U.S. Hwy 165) Project and providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Introduction of Resolutions & Ordinances:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of the property described below and sell to Kimareanna L. Ross all rights, title, and interest that the City may have acquired to the east/2 of lot in Lot 11 and west/2 of lot in Lot 11, Stubbs Young Bayou Addition, beg 251.11 ft north of se corner said lot and fronting 40 ft on east line of said square, depth 107.475 ft, Ouachita Parish, (no situs) S 21st St., District 3, Monroe, La, by adjudication at Tax Sale dated June 12, 2017, and further with respect thereto. (Legal) (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance authorizing Mayor Friday Ellis to sign all documents in connection with the acquisition of properties related to State Project No. H.007300 Highway: Kansas Lane – Garrett Road Connector & I-20 Improvements Route: La 594 Ouachita Parish and further providing with respect thereto. (Legal) (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved to remove item (c) to Introduce an Ordinance adopting a Reapportionment Plan for Monroe City Council Districts in accordance with the 2020 Census of Population and Appropriate Federal and State Laws, and Section 2-02 of the Home Rule Charter of the City of Monroe and further providing with respect thereto. (Council) (Mr. Harvey nay)

Mr. Harvey stated for the record, this is a failure of the City Council to perform their duties by removing this item again just because the Council probably isn't willing to tell people what they don't want to hear. He said the Council would rather do it again another night and they are right up against the boundaries of it, next to zero.

Mrs. Ezernack said she wants to make it clear; the meeting tomorrow night will be an official meeting of the Monroe City Council and an Ordinance will be introduced pertaining to this particular item. She wanted to clarify the Council will meet all of the deadlines.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, Assistant Attorney, said that is correct, following the removal of this item, Council will approve a special meeting called for tomorrow. He said it is a 24-hour notice for a special meeting called for tomorrow. He said it is his understanding as long as the meeting occurs tomorrow night the City can still meet their deadlines.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if the approval of the special meeting needs to be done in an open form.

Mr. Creekbaum noted to call a special meeting it can come from the Council chair alone. He said he thinks the City Charter requires all Council members to have 24-hour notice and it would be

helpful if it is publicly called here at tonight's meeting. He further noted that gives the Council Clerk time to post notice and it puts everything in the minutes that they complied to the Charter.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to clarify if the special meeting needs to be put in a form of a motion.

Mr. Creekbaum said no it does not, Council Chair Dawson can call a special meeting without a form of a motion.

Mrs. Ezernack stated she came prepared to vote this evening and she wants to make sure they meet every deadline. She further stated unfortunately in 2010 that slipped by the Council, and it caused a lot of embarrassment to our community. She said they were able to make it work but it split the election.

Mr. Creekbaum stated they have consulted with the advertising people, and it is his understanding as long as they have it to them by 8am Thursday morning.

Mrs. Ezernack stated as long as its on the agenda and the Council does something about it, she is good.

Mrs. Dawson called for the vote.

Mr. Creekbaum asked Mrs. Dawson to indicate for the record she is calling a special meeting. He said to give the Council Clerk Ms. Riley time to post notice which time would she suggest.

Mr. Creekbaum and Ms. Riley agreed on the 7:15 pm tomorrow for the 24-hour notice.

Mrs. Dawson indicated for the record Special City Council Meeting for tomorrow night Wednesday December 14, 2022, at 7:15 PM to Introduce an Ordinance adopting a Reapportionment Plan for Monroe City Council Districts in accordance with the 2020 Census of Population and Appropriate Federal and State Laws, and Section 2-02 of the Home Rule Charter of the City of Monroe and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Creekbaum stated 24-hour notice has been given.

Mrs. Dawson stated the Community Meeting will be at City Hall in the Council Chambers at 5pm and the Legal & Special Session City Council Meeting will be at the City Hall Council Chambers at 7:15pm. She further stated this is the 24-hour notice for the City Council Special meeting.

Mr. Creekbaum stated that notice is sufficient.

Citizen's Participation:

(1.) Ms. Lashun Johnson and Mr. Willie Grayson, Monroe, LA, stated they are here about a scheduling dispute with the Monroe Civic Center. She said on October 29, 2022, they were told by a Civic Center personnel upon signing a contract that no other event will take place 30 days prior or after their event. She said on or around November 14th they were told a similar event had been scheduled and advertise but they were told by a Civic Center personnel that the event would be changed to a later date. She said upon speaking to another personnel the event has not been rescheduled and it has been advertised and tickets are being sold. She further stated her contract was signed October 29, 2022. They reached out and they still don't have a resolution to the problem. Mrs. Johnson contacted the Civic Center personnel on December 7th on how important it was that the event did not take place before her event. She said she told them it was detrimental to her event, and she has put in a lot of financial resources. She said it would take an adverse effect on her event and she still doesn't have an answer.

Mrs. Dawson said she would put her in contact with the Director of Community Affairs Mr. Doug Seegers and she asked him to speak with Ms. Johnson after the meeting about this issue.

Ms. Johnson said she had an attorney to send a letter to Mr. Seegers and she has not received an answer.

Mr. Creekbaum said if a letter has been sent by an attorney the Legal Department will acquire it and reach out to the attorney. He said the City can't communicate with her if she has had an attorney reach out.

Mrs. Dawson said Legal will be getting in touch with Ms. Johnson's attorney.

(2.) Mr. Verbon Muhammad, Monroe, LA, said the underpass on South Second has been out of order for several weeks. He said he spoke with Mr. Marshall about it, and he was informed they were waiting on a part. He said South Second is very critical to the Southside of Monroe and he said if the train is sitting on Texas Avenue you have to travel all the way around to Plum Street. He stated with the weather on tonight they may close Plum Street underpass as well and he is asking the City to expedite the work on the underpass on South Second.

Mr. Marshall said he spoke with Engineering, and it is in the hands of DOTD. He said the underpass is on the radar for immediate repair as soon as they can get it done.

(3.) Ms. Kenya Roberson, Monroe Regional Black Chamber of Commerce, said she appreciates the Council allowing the meeting to be scheduled on tomorrow. She said she disagrees with Mr. Harvey comments because the community needs to understand and have clarity which is the reason why they were asking for the community meeting. She wanted to know with the weather forecast for tomorrow and State offices closing due to the weather will there still be a meeting.

Mr. Harvey said the Council wouldn't have the meeting.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum stated the meeting has to happen.

Mr. Harvey said his issue is not about having the community meeting or anything else but the Council waiting to the eleventh hour. He stated the Council should have done this months ago and it has to be done by December 31st. He further stated it is failure to execute and failure of the Council's duties that they are still having this conversation.

Ms. Roberson said she appreciates his answer, but she also thinks it's a duty to the people who elected the Council to give them clarity. She wanted to clarify with the State Offices being closed on tomorrow because of the weather will the meeting still be held.

Mrs. Dawson said yes ma'am, she said the Council was waiting on the people they were referred to by Senator Jackson, but they had things going on in Georgia. She stated they couldn't look at the maps then, but when they did look at the maps they couldn't get back to the Council until today. She further stated if they would have gotten back to the Council, they could have scheduled a meeting before today. She said the meeting did happen with Mr. Marshall, Representative Patricia Moore, Senator Katrina Jackson, the Legal Defense Funds, and herself today at 2 o'clock.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m., upon motion of Ms. Woods and it was seconded by Mr. Marshall.

Mrs. Kema Dawson
Chairman

Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Ileana Murray
Staff Secretary