

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
July 23, 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: Mr. Harvey, Mrs. Ezernack, Ms. Woods, Mr. McFarland, & Mr. Muhammad

There was absent: None.

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

The Invocation was led by City Engineer Mr. Morgan McCallister.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(1.) Mr. Harvey had no announcements.

(2.) Mrs. Ezernack welcomed everyone to the meeting, and she said she is glad to see them here.

(3.) Mr. McFarland welcomed everyone to the meeting, and he said he is glad everyone is here to get involved in City government. He thanked everyone that came out to his first Community Meeting. He said it was well attended, and he received a lot of feedback from the constituents. He noted his second meeting will be on August 12th somewhere Downtown. He said he hopes one of the businesses would allow him to have a meeting there. He said he is looking forward to meeting and greeting all and to hear their concerns.

(4.) Mr. Muhammad stated his goal tonight was to say in the month of July the City hasn't had a murder but unfortunately there was one Saturday in Foster Heights. He said there is a situation in Foster Heights the City needs to get a grip of and a lot of murders have taken place in that community. He said the Senior Citizens Academy is still going on at Benoit and he thanked all that are participating in the academy. On another note, he said he also had a successful Community Meeting. He said they covered a lot of topics and had a chance to hear from the citizens. He said they are going to continue to keep having meetings to bring the citizen's voice back to City Hall.

(5.) Mayor Ellis welcomed everyone to the City Council meeting.

(6.) Ms. Woods stated the Council has a full agenda tonight and a lot of things to be talked about and addressed. She asked everyone to respect the opinions of others, she said she will recognize everyone, and keep comments to a minimum. She said you will only get one opportunity to share your comments on a given topic and during the Council participation the public will not be allowed to talk again on that particular subject. She said the Council wanted to keep the meetings decent and in order while at the same time allowing individuals to talk about issues involving the City. On another note, she said she had a Community Meeting that was well attended, and the meeting will be once a month on the 3rd Wednesday at 10am at the Powell Street Community Center.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey and seconded by Mrs. Ezernack, and the minutes of the Legal and Regular session of July 9, 2024, were unanimously approved. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. McFarland stated that it is proper that an agenda be approved before the Council approve minutes. He said he noticed the City Council always approve the minutes and don't have a motion to approve the agenda. He said the Council need to get things back into prospective where it needs to be concerning the approval of the agenda. He said the City Attorney wanted to add some things to the agenda tonight and those things should be added at the beginning of the meeting. He said when the agenda goes out the Council need a line item that says approval of the agenda.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, noted there is nothing in the Council Rules and Procedures that requires the approval of the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. He said it is a practice that somebody has recognized, and that is something the Chair can institute. He said until there is a rule specified there is some flexibility there and he said if there is a rule he is not aware of it but until that time it is up to the Chair.

Ms. Woods noted the Council will take that up outside of the meeting.

Mr. McFarland noted the Council should look at adding that because the meetings shouldn't be all over the place. He said if the Council approve the agenda they have a structure to follow.

PROPOSED CONDEMNATIONS:

The following condemnation were considered:

1. 2925 Jackson St. (D4) Owner – Lucy Dale Wilford (Estate), Et AL C/O Ella Gibson Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey 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.)

Ms. Stacy Newbill, Code Enforcement Officer, stated that this property is a dilapidated structure, and it was brought to Environmental Court on April 23, 2024, it was deemed blight and a nuisance. They are asking the property be condemned.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know if this was brought to the Council or the Court.

Ms. Newbill noted Environmental Court.

2. 108 Malvern St. (D5) – Owner – Anthony Guillory Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland 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.)

Ms. Newbill stated this a dilapidated structure, and it was brought to Environmental Court March 26, 2024, it was deemed blight and a nuisance. They are asking the property be condemned.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if there was any contact with the owner.

Ms. Newbill said no sir.

3. 4102 Lee Ct. (D4) – Owner – Woods Family Estates, LLC Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Muhammad 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.)

Ms. Newbill stated this a dilapidated structure, and it was brought to Environmental Court March 26, 2024, it was deemed blight and a nuisance. She said she spoke with the property owner today and if they are given 30 days they will demolish the property on their own.

4. 3710 Polk St. (D4) – Owner – Pearlie Irby and Danny Lenard, ET AL Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey 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.)

Ms. Newbill stated this a dilapidated structure, and it was brought to Environmental Court March 26, 2024, it was deemed blight and a nuisance. They are asking the property owner be given 30 days.

Mr. McFarland said he is glad the City trying to clean up District 4 and he motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30days

5. 1109 Griffin St. (D3) – Owner – Barbara Ferguson (Estate) & Evion Taylor (Estate) Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland 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.)

Ms. Newbill stated this is a dilapidated structure, and it was brought to Environmental Court March 26, 2024. They are asking that the property owner be given 30 days.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if there was any contact with the owner.

Ms. Newbill said no ma'am.

ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF BIDS:

(a) Upon motion of MR. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8745 accepting D&J Construction Company, LLC's agreed upon base bid for the Monroe Regional Airport Taxiway D Construction Phase 1 Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods stated she received a few calls on this item and if the City ever thought the Council would let twelve million dollars go back to the federal government they were sadly mistaken. She said the Council is about moving the City forward and making sure the Council is doing the right thing.

Mr. Muhammad noted the City must get another airline and there are a lot of people who travel to Houston, TX for medical reasons and they fly. He said it is very inconvenient to fly from Dallas to Houston. He wanted Mr. Charles Butcher, Airport Director, to work diligently to attach another airline to the City.

Mr. Butcher noted he is working on it.

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Council:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and approved to Passover confirming the appointment of to the Board of Commissioners for the Southside Economic Development District and further providing with respect thereto.

Mrs. Ezernack motion to appoint Mr. Lamon Woods and seconded by Mr. Harvey.

Mr. Roy Heavenly, Monroe Chamber of Commerce, stated Mr. Woods is their appointee. He said he sent a bio of Mr. Woods to each Councilmember. He said Mr. Woods is a lifelong resident of Monroe, and he started real estate investing as a part-time job then went to full-time. He said they have over 100 properties and a lot of those are in South Monroe. He said when he talked to Mr. Hill about the appointment he said it would be important to get someone with real estate investment knowledge on SEDD and the Chamber Executive Committee voted on him.

Mr. Muhammad stated he has a letter from the SEDD Treasurer-Secretary Roosevelt Wright and on behalf of SEDD. He noted the Dhaliwal family is deeply invested in the future of South Monroe. He said the 76 stores and the Now&Save stores represent an investment of millions of dollars. He further stated even though Mr. Dhaliwal's 3 year term has expired he desires to continue to serve and according to the by-laws he will continue to serve until he is replaced by the Council. He stated the letter wanted the members of the Council to recognize Mr. Dhaliwal invaluable contributions to his continued importance of the SEDD and take no action to replace him.

(The Chairman called for the vote: Mr. Harvey aye, Mrs. Ezernack aye, Ms. Woods nay, Mr. McFarland nay, and Mr. Muhammad nay.)

Mr. Creekbaum noted that Mr. Woods was one name on a list of four and if it is the Council's pleasure to take no action he thinks that may be a separate motion.

Mrs. Ezernack noted it is her understanding this is the Chamber of Commerce position and obviously they must feel as if Mr. Dhaliwal is no longer their appointee. She wanted to know how the Council plan to remedy that particular aspect of it.

Mr. Creekbaum noted whatever the Council's pleasure may be; he said he needs to make sure the Council appropriately dispense with the item before moving to the next item to have a clear demarcation. He said the SEDD Statute simply state the Monroe City Council shall appoint a nominee from a list submitted by the Monroe Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Muhammad noted the Council have voted and the Chamber can come back with another name if that is there pleasure. He asked that the community support Mr. Dhaliwal because he has done a lot in the community, and he is doing an excellent job on SEDD. He said there was another attempt prior to the new Council for him to be replaced but they are trying to put SEDD together properly.

Mr. Heavenly noted the Chamber had their appointee picked back in June. He said Mr. Tony Little, SEDD, called and stated SEDD would support their pick if they waited for the new Council to vote. He said Mr. Dhaliwal has done a fantastic job and the Council all have appointments for the SEDD that they can appoint him too. He further noted the Chamber have three and one year terms that people rotate off of and the Chamber is not saying that Mr. Dhaliwal did anything bad. He said the Chamber felt that Mr. Woods would be their pick for this time, and he waited because he respected the Council.

Ms. Woods stated the Council would move forward with the agenda.

Mr. Creekbaum noted the Council would have to Passover or remove it from the agenda.

Mr. McFarland said the democrat process on this matter is if there are Councilmembers that want to offer the other three names allow them to offer those three names. He said the Council would vote and that would be the pleasure of this Council.

Ms. Woods noted the names are Mr. Corbin Legg, Mr. Mike Abrams, and Mr. Chris Lewis.

Mr. Muhammad motion to Passover the List of Nominees seconded by Mr. McFarland.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to amend the motion to Passover until the first Council Meeting in August. She said obviously the board needs a member to do the business of SEDD and the Council should bring it back as soon as possible.

Mr. Muhammad stated Mr. Dhaliwal has been serving and he desires to continue to serve. He further stated the SEDD members wrote a letter asking the Council to let Mr. Dhaliwal continue to serve.

Mr. Creekbaum noted he doesn't think another Councilmember has the ability to unilaterally amend a motion without the Council person's consent. He said Mrs. Ezernack proposed an amendment to the motion and it's if Mr. Muhammad is willing to accept the proposed amendment.

Mr. Tony Little stated he did ask Mr. Heavenly to wait until the new Council were seated and this item was originally supposed to be on the last agenda. He further stated the appointment belonged to the Chamber by Statute and he thought this item would be pass overed and be addressed at another meeting.

Mr. McFarland noted the law states the end result is here with the Council and the Council have the final say so. He further noted the Monroe Chamber have three other names and the Council gave an opportunity to offer up the names.

Mr. Little stated this is not appropriate to be done in the middle of a meeting and his silence is not that he doesn't have an opinion on it.

Mr. Roosevelt Wright, SEDD, stated the letter the Council have comes from SEDD and he said there is a large Indian business community in South. He said Mr. Dhaliwal's family represents about 15 large businesses with millions of dollars invested in South Monroe. He further stated some of the plans SEDD have coming up will count on Mr. Dhaliwal to get things done. He said Mr. Dhaliwal has the resources and connections with other Indian businesses to get them done. He said SEDD was asked to let this come before this Council and now they are asking the Council to follow the Statute which the Chamber has the right to recommend somebody, and the Council also have the right to turn it down. He said if the Council turns it down Mr. Dhaliwal will continue to serve until his replacement is named by the Council.

(The Chair called for the vote to Passover item (a))

Mr. Muhammad stated SEDD hasn't functioned properly for years, and the Council is trying to put SEDD properly in place to get things done in South Monroe. He said in his opinion Mr. Dhaliwal is the most valuable person with SEDD and why take him off when he has all the stores in South Monroe.

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8746 confirming the re-appointment of Cedrick Hemphill to the Monroe heritage Preservation Commission and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8747 appointing Juanita G. Woods to the Interstate 20 Economic Development Corporation and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(d) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8748 appointing Verbon Muhammad, Sr. to the Monroe Capital Infrastructure Commission and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(e) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8749 appointing Rev. James E. Jackson, Sr. to the Interstate 20 Economic Development Corporation and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

There being no objection from the Council and there were none, the Chair requested to switch the order which the agenda items are listed and moved item (f) to item (a).

(f) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and approved Resolution No. 8750 repealing Resolution No. 8719 (Interstate 20 Economic Development Corporation Articles) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.) (Mr. Harvey & Mrs. Ezernack Nay)

Mr. Harvey stated the changes were made in the best interest of the community and not for any kind of political gain. He said ultimately he wanted the board to succeed, and this item is at the Council's pleasure.

(The Chair proceeded with item (a) on the agenda.)

Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8751 approving a Fiber Construction Agreement with AT&T Services, Inc. for new fiber construction services within the City of Monroe and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. David Aubrey, President of AT&T Louisiana and Mississippi, stated they have been invited to collaborate with the citizens of Monroe to bring high speed internet and broadband AT&T fiber at hundred percent to the community. He said this is different than anywhere else in the two states he serves as president, and this will be the first collaborative opportunity both public and private where they serve hundred percent of the residents and businesses across an entire city. He said they will work not only on the Northside of town but definitely include South Monroe and be a partner that will make the City proud. He said this means not only bringing additional technicians but bringing jobs, provide services, and provide the speeds that no other competitor particularly right now in this market would bring fiber to the home.

Mr. Ezernack thanked Mr. Aubrey for responding to the City's RFP and she said this is an exciting project for the entire City of Monroe.

Ms. Woods thanked Mr. Aubrey for all they are doing and if anyone has visited on the Southside of Monroe it's almost like being in rural part of the community.

Mr. Muhammad thanked the Council and the Administration for putting this together as well. He wanted to know if this will help with the data plans.

Mr. Aubrey said absolutely, whatever they offer anywhere else in the State or anywhere else in this particular region they would offer it across the market. He said he rates will be very competitive and they have plans as low as \$30 that would give a hundred megabits of speed.

Mayor Ellis noted he doesn't need to explain to the families what proper connection to the internet means today with telehealth for our seniors if they can't leave their home. He said the City saw what played out during the pandemic with families trying to learn and educators at home trying to host meetings. He thanked the Council for allowing this work to happen and to be able to be the thought leader in this space and be the first at something that other communities can kind of model. He further noted it goes to show the mindset of the community and the willingness of the Council to be able to drive something like this to work and show what a true public-private partnership can be. He stated at the forefront of this being affordability, equity, and understanding that where we start the work is just as important as how affordable it is to the residents. He said the community

allowed the City to be able to collect data and when the Council members are asking the community to participate in community meetings that is why it is so important. He said this is the foundation the City is laying for future investment, and we all realize broadband connectivity is a necessity in our communities.

Mr. McFarland said he know the Council haven't taken the vote yet, but it seems as they're all in favor. He said he had a wonderful conversation with Mr. Aubrey, and he thanked him for what he is doing with and for the City.

Mr. Christopher Orange Sr., 3901 Old Sterlington Rd., recognized the new Council members and he stated he wanted to speak about the agreement with AT&T being a cautionary tale. He said when talking about broadband access and high speed at \$30 plus a month obviously you're not going to get that type of high speed for that type of investment. He said one of the issues he had with AT&T coming here is the same issue he had with Starlink. He said they were stopping a lot of folks from getting the actual speed and he said 13 years ago CenturyLink brought him here with a similar situation with investments from the State and millions of dollars. He stated CenturyLink was supposed to build products that were going to make internet access more affordable, backup systems, and network fail up. He said for all practical purposes no longer exist in the Monroe area and he said with this investment he caution the City to make sure to have a fail over. He said with a simple patch upgrade that nearly destroyed about 850 million internet connected and business folks. He said if one internet system goes down it's tested there's another network that's tied to it.

Ms. Kenya Roberson, Northeast Louisiana Black Chamber of Commerce, said she is very excited with AT&T, and she has gone back and forth with them with things of interest for business, community, and residents. She said they impressed and wowed her through commitment and engagement. She noted they are not just willing with the community but also with the youth. She further noted they insured her that they are going to do some major things here and will be inclusive as a City. She said on behalf of the Northeast Louisiana Black Chamber she is in favor.

Legal Department:

ADD-ON: Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved to add on a Resolution authorizing the City of Monroe to participate in the Kroger National Settlement related to the Opiod Epidemic and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8752 authorizing the City of Monroe to participate in the Kroger National Settlement related to the Opiod Epidemic and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.) (There were no public comments.)

Department of Public Works:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8753 approving Work Authorization No. 6 between the City of Monroe and Garver LLC for the Taxiway D Construction – Phase 1 Project at the Monroe Regional Airport and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. Muhammad stated he noticed Mrs. Rowell would be the representative on the resolution for the taxiway and in the first resolution for the taxiway it just says the City.

Mr. Creekbaum noted on contacts with the FAA grant agreement they typically request the Mayor's signature, and they keep it more generic to just say city representative. He further noted the work authorizations the City typically designate Ms. Rowell as the signer of those documents.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if normally the Mayor would be the representative.

Mr. Creekbaum said any State and federal funded projects the State and federal entities want to see the Mayor's signature.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8754 approving a Mowing and Litter Maintenance Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if this agreement has expanded.

Mr. Creekbaum said this is a renewal of an agreement that the City renew every year and the proposed mileage is 42 or 41.97 miles the same as last year. He said it's on State highways whether divided or undivided and interstate roadways. He noted this is the exact renewal the City has been maintaining.

Engineering Services:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8755 approving Change Order No. One (1) for the Texas Standifer Trunkline Repairs Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8756 approving Change Order No. Two (2) for the WPCC – Equalization Basin Dredging Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8757 accepting as substantially complete work done by the Lemoine Company for the WPCC – Equalization Basin Dredging Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8758 approving a Traffic Signal Maintenance Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(e) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8759 approving a Master Services Agreement with Neel-Schaffer to provide engineering and other related Professional Services and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. McFarland wanted to know if the City will employ this company as needed and if they will bill the City hourly.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, said correct, and he noted hourly and per task. He said just standard in line with the City normal master services agreement in the back of the documentation there is an itemized list for a schedule of rates.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know what is the main function.

Mr. McCallister noted this particular service involve reviewing of invoices such as the Kansas Lane Extension project federally and State funded. He said traffic studies associated with the previous resolution approved for signal maintenance agreement, outside professional services that the traffic engineering department are not currently licensed to do, signal modification, and build out within the department.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know how many people in Mr. McCallister's (Engineering) Department.

Mr. McCallister wanted clarification if Mr. McFarland is referring to the engineering department or traffic engineering.

Mr. McFarland stated the City will sub this out as needed and he is looking at the engineering budget and what is allocated. He questioned if there's no one that can do any of these services.

Mr. McCallister noted traffic studies no sir. He said they do not have anyone on the staff that is capable of performing those services. He said there are additional services, licenses, and certifications outside of a professional engineer. He further noted these individuals are well equipped, certified, and experienced to perform.

Mr. McFarland stated with the multitude in the department it seems as if the City would hire those that would have these expertise. He said it is problematic they will have to take another look at the budget. He said the City have to make sure that everything is above board and those that are in the department can do this work. He said he has a problem with the multiplicity of people in the department and those in the department should have some type of engineering degree. He said

whatever their pay is it should equal up to what they can offer the City. He said the Council need to have meeting concerning the budget. He said he know there was a financial meeting tonight but there needs to be an open meeting. He said to go back through the budget that was previously approved by the former Council and take an in depth look at the amount of money.

Mr. McCallister noted for the Council's observation last year the City paid this particular professional service provider right at \$60,000 to perform those services. He said if he hires someone at that rate within the engineering department say \$60,000 would be the base salary, plus pension, and insurance roughly \$85,000. He said the City will not find a certified professional engineer that is equipped and has the experience to do this for \$85,000. He said he is running the engineering department and divisions building out those budgets. He said he is adding positions in the traffic department because he felt as though they needed more help. He said building out the traffic department to respond properly to issues with the City. He said he thinks the work Neel Schaffer has done for the City has proven to be sufficient and more than adequate. He said the engineering department manager are not building out a department to design those projects.

Mr. McFarland noted with all that being said again the Council may need to take a look at the department and he is not saying hire addition too, but they may need to remove some that aren't qualified. He said the Council needs to take a look since the Council has the last say concerning the budget.

(f) Upon motion of Mr. Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8760 approving Change Order No. One (1) for the WPCC – Equalization Basin Aeration System Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. McFarland said he thinks all the Council concerns were pretty much addressed on this matter. He said the City will have to put something in place concerning the days and he believe that the Council have a very good dialogue concerning this matter. He said the Council will move forward tonight but it may not happen like that again.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance approving a two-year extension of the existing Ambulance Services Agreement with Acadian Ambulance Service, Inc. and further providing (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance adopting the authorized Millage Rate(s) and providing for the Levying of Special and General Taxes for the City of Monroe for the year 2024 and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance approving a lease between the City of Monroe and Pilots for Patients at the Monroe Regional Airport and further providing with respect thereto.

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance authorizing the City of Monroe to take Corporal Possession of and sell to Kevin Lee all rights, title, and interest that the City may have acquired to Lots 11 & 12, Square 21, Alexandars Addition, and that portion of an alley revoked in book 1334/673, (no situs) Dick Taylor St., District 4, Ouachita Parish, Monroe, La, by Adjudication at Tax Sale dated June 4, 2018, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

There being no objection from the Council and there were none, the Chair requested to move items (e, f, & g) to the top of list.

(e) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad seconded by Mr. McFarland and approved to introduce an Ordinance Repealing Ordinance No. 12,219 (Video Bingo Tax Rededication) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.) (Mr. Harvey & Mr. Ezernack nay)

Mr. McFarland stated the Council talked over, begged, and pleaded with this Ordinance but it fell on deaf ears. He said the Council will move forward tonight introducing the ordinance to repeal it.

Mrs. Ezernack noted she doesn't understand what the objection is. She said is it the content of it or is it just the Council acted on it, and you weren't apart of the action.

Mr. McFarland stated this ordinance is rededicating the funds and the City hasn't established who the money will go too. He said the Council have talked about how some employees only get ten dollars an hour. He said the City have to do some soul searching before rededicating funds to give to the Mayor to give to whoever he desire. He said the Council need to have that conversation and they will move forward again with the first reading. He said it's not because they wasn't here. He said it is because they don't like the fact it is an open check, and they don't know who is going to receive this.

(f) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance Repealing Ordinance No. 12,220 (Special Tax Election) and further providing with respect thereto. (Mr. Harvey & Mrs. Ezernack nay)

Ms. Patricia Turner, 315 Marshal Drive, wanted to know what a Special Tax Election mean and what it does.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum stated in order to call for a tax election there must be approval by the governing body to call the tax election. He said the City's capital infrastructure tax is nearing the end of its useful life. He further stated in June of this year the Council passed an ordinance calling for an election to renew the capital infrastructure tax for a period of 25 years. He noted the introduction of the repeal, if it passes would rescind the call for that special election for the capital infrastructure tax.

Ms. Turner wanted to know if this was for mostly infrastructure.

Mr. Creekbaum noted the tax itself identifies seven enumerated categories that it is used for. He said without the list in front of him in its present form he thinks its streets, drainage, and certain public facilities.

Mr. Turner wanted to know are there specific streets identified within the ordinance.

Mr. Creekbaum said no, it is categories.

Mr. Turner wanted to know if the Council decides where the money goes.

Mr. Creekbaum said that is correct and the tax would be renewed again. He said the renewal is an election it has to go before the public for a vote if the election happens. He said if it was extended the projects the tax fund generate a pot of money that the City usually bonds against and the bond fund is what is used to go out and do the projects.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if this has been sent to Baton Rouge.

Mr. Creekbaum stated he doesn't know, and the City have a bond counsel that is assisting.

Mr. Muhammad noted the reason the Council is asking this be repealed is because in June it was brought, and it was confusing. He said this is for the City's benefit to make sure the language is proper. He said there is an election in November, so it doesn't have to be in December.

Mr. Creekbaum stated it is too late for the ballot in November and there are datelines to get on certain ballots. He said the November election is the primary and December is a general election if there are any runoffs or things like that.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know how many years will this tax expire.

Mr. Creekbaum stated it will expire in 2029.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know what is the rush of having an election of a tax that won't expire for another five to six years.

Mrs. Stacy Rowell, Director of Administration, noted it is nearing it's useful life and it is the bonding capacity that allows the City to use the money for additional projects. She said the City is about at capacity with the large projects on the books right now. She further noted in order to move new projects forward the City would like the capacity to be able to go out and bond additional money.

Mr. McFarland noted in so many words that the bond attorney can go out and get these bonds so the City can have the money early. He said you add 25 years the money will be gone, and he doesn't understand why the City is trying to rush this as if the City is broke. He further noted he believes there is a resolution that states that if there's an amendment to an ordinance that it should be brought back to a first reading. He stated the previous Council changed it from a forever tax to a 25 year tax in one meeting that was substantial. He said that can be challenged that the City didn't bring that back to be advertised to the citizens of Monroe and that would be problematic for them down the road. He said they are bringing this back so it can be done right. He further stated they placed this election on an off election day knowing that the majority of the citizens of Monroe will go out to vote during the presidential election and they had an opportunity then to place it on that particular date.

Mrs. Ezernack commented that she thinks the way Mr. McFarland reiterated what Mrs. Rowell said was incorrect. She said the bonds and the City ability to collect the tax expires in 2029, however, if the City want to bond a project the City need to have more than five years left of the availability to pay it back and that is what the tax help the City do. She said the City would not be able to bond a new project and the money in there now is already committed to projects in progress. She noted it is important to be able to bring this tax forward to constituents to ensure the City will be able to do large projects. She further noted the City will not be spending money they don't have and if the tax doesn't pass we will have no more capital infrastructure committee, funds, or the ability to bond a project to correct the record.

Mr. McFarland stated if you have Council members in opposition it will not pass. He said it is best to do it the right way and we won't have any problems down the road. He said one of the main issues was that it went from a forever tax to 25 years.

(g) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance Repealing Ordinance No. 12,225 (Purchasing and Bidding Procedures) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.) (Mr. Harvey & Mrs. Ezernack nay)

(The chairman continued with the introduction of items a, b, c, & d)

RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCE FOR SECOND READING AND FINAL ADOPTION AND SUBJECT TO PUBLIC HEARING:

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

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,226 authorizing the City of Monroe to take Corporeal Possession of and sell to Chandra Melancon all rights, title, and interest that the city may have acquired to Lot 4, H 1 & J s Rosenheim's Resub. Lots 11,12, 13, & 14, Sq. 6 Alexanders Addition, Ouachita Parish, no situs – Jackson St., District 4, Monroe, La, by Adjudication at Tax Sale dated June 11, 2019, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

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

(b) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,227 authorizing the City of Monroe to take Corporeal Possession of and sell to Chandra Melancon all rights, title, and interest that the city may have acquired to Lot 6, Square 11, Unit 6, Humphries Addition, Ouachita Parish, 3810 Segrest Mercy St., District 3, Monroe, La, by Adjudication at Tax Sale dated June 12, 2019, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Citizen's Participation:

(1.) Mr. Brandon Wilhite, 1306 S. 9th Street, thanked the Council for everything that they contribute to the city. He also appreciated the condolences that were given about the passing of his father, Foster Wilhite Jr also known as PPW. He stated that his father passed away on July 3rd, but what his concern was after the 911 call was made, he noticed that the fire department did not show up. He expected that all responders would have been present during their time of crisis in order to ensure the best chances of their loved one surviving. He is seeking information as to why all of the emergency responders were not there during their crisis.

(2.) Ms. Minnie Miller Eleam, 1607 Sunset Drive, is concerned about her water bill being \$300.00 dollars for the last three months. She reached out to the water company, and they stated that there

was a glitch in the system. She is asking how long it will take them to rectify this situation. She said that she is a teacher, and she doesn't have time to continue chasing behind the water company to fix this error. She strongly suggests that something is done about this matter.

(3.) Mr. Franz Hill, 1700 Auburn Avenue, congratulated the new members on the Council. He also gave his appreciation to the Mayor towards Ms. Roshonda Gospel and all the hard work that she does in this City. He said he was completely impressed about her knowledge of the things that go on in the city.

(4.) Ms. Kenya Roberson, 116 Glenwood Drive, announced their 3rd Annual Back to School event on August 3, 2024, at the Mt. Zion Life Center from 9:00am-1:00pm. She stated that they have partnered up with the Omegas and the Renaissance Movement Committee and they are requesting all of the Council Members to attend and show their faces at this event to volunteer. She said that it is a blessing to be able to serve the community and be able to help a family in need with their children's school supplies.

(5.) Mr. Steve Cheek, 601 K. Street, shared his appreciation to the Public Works Department for clearing the street in their neighborhood. He also wanted to express his unhappiness with the closure of the lane on N.6th Street. He said that the cones are an eye sore, and it feels as if it is an inconvenience creating a bike/pedestrian lane on N.6th street.

(6.) Ms. Mondrian Douglas, 5513 Long Drive, said her civil rights were violated, and she would like for the Council to look into and address her concerns about law enforcement in the City of Monroe.

(7.) Rev. Dr. Ambrose Douzart, 191 Street, is now the Chapter President of the Ouachita NAACP. He said that he came to thank the Mayor and Council members that attended the banquet. He states that the NAACP strives to do better, and he would like for the City and them to work together. He thanks them again for coming and for the donation they received at the banquet, and he said as long as he is the President, they are going to do things on the up and up.

(8.) Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 S.5th Street, said the reason why they ask so many questions is because they read the agenda items so fast, they can't understand or know what it is about. She stated that if Council changed the rules, then she expects them to read the agenda item in its entirety so that the citizens can know and comprehend what they are voting on. All she wants is clarity and an understanding of the She mentioned last meeting that she wanted the Council to come and ride along with her to see what she has been complaining about in her neighborhood. She said that Mr. Harvey and his wife did a ride along with her and they were able to see her grievances about the neighborhood. She appreciated him taking time to do that with her.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m., upon motion of Mr. McFarland and it was seconded by Mr. Harvey.

Ms. Juanita G. Woods
Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Ms. Ileana Murray
Staff Secretary

Mrs. Rachel Washington
Council Coordinator

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.