

There was a legal special 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 Douglas Harvey, Chairman, called the meeting to order. He then asked the Clerk to call the roll.

There were present: Council members Harvey, Ezernack, Woods, Marshall and Dawson

There was absent: None.

The Honorable Douglas Harvey, presiding officer, declared a quorum was present and asked Mr. Tom Janway, Public Works Director to lead the invocation and pledge.

The Honorable Douglas Harvey, presiding officer, then stated the object of the meeting; that being to consider:  
(1) The 2021/22 fiscal year budget submitted by the Administration for review by the Council in Budget Hearing #1.

Mr. Danny Richards, Budget Officer, gave the opening statement/summary of the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2021/2022 and thanked the budget team for helping put together this budget as well as the City Departments and Division Heads, the Monroe City Marshal's Office and the Monroe City Court for their input and assistance. This is a citywide budget and it takes a citywide effort and he thanked everyone involved.

For the General Fund, the Administration proposed a \$60.55 million operating budget and it is structurally balanced and it's fiscally responsible. Structurally balanced just means that we are utilizing recurring revenue to fund our recurring expenditures, so there is no plan to use any of the 14.2 million fund balance to fund the fiscal year 2022 expenditures. If you look at the fund balance of 14.2 million, and you take out the non-spendable that gives you 13.8 million. The ratio of the unassigned fund balance to our operating expenses is 22.8%, so best practices recommend at a minimum of 17%, which is 2 months of operating expenses. The external auditors indicated that we had almost 3 months of fund balance, so that's pretty good and the reason you want to have a little bit more; first is exposure to natural disasters and other events and someone mentioned the flood of 2016, now we got the pandemic, hurricanes and tornadoes, so 3 months of operating expenses is pretty good.

For the Revenue Fund, Mr. Richards noted that he starts the budgeting process with forecasting revenues and fiscal year 2022 is a little bit difficult due to the pandemic and the uncertainty of where revenues are going to fall. The revenue estimate is \$60.55 million, a decrease of \$512,000 or 0.8% and he thinks this is a conservative estimate and as new information comes in, they will revise it accordingly. There are several revenue sources and the largest is Sales Tax and that is at 62% of all the general fund revenue and also the most volatile. For the current year and he has projected we will have over \$38 million maybe \$38.5 million and compared to last year it was \$35 million so you have about a \$3 million swing there. He thinks this is largely driven by disaster recovery spending, federal stimulus and extended employment benefit. For the current year he has estimated Sales Tax at \$37.4 million which is basically the same estimate he had for the current year prior to the pandemic, so he is basically estimating being flat. The second source is a distance second which is Property Tax at 13% and that estimate is \$7.9 million and that is based off the parish assessor's assessed valued property of \$440.3 million.

For Fees, Charges and Commissions at 10% and the estimate is \$6.3 million and your largest source in there is Sanitation Fees at \$3 million, Entergy Services Settlement approximately \$929 thousand and Sale Tax Handling Fees at \$755 thousand.

For the Expenditures budgeted at \$60.55 million, a decrease of 512 thousand or 0.8% and incorporated into each department's budget is a group insurance increase of 3% and a pension increase for the Municipal employees at 6.3%.

For Personnel they cut 9 full-time positions, 8 Part-time positions for a total 17 positions and these were all vacant positions that they are not funding for that year, so that's a decrease of 2.1%.

The Budget by Departments: The percent changed from last year are different rates because we took a more strategic approach on where they wanted to allocate money to the individual departments.

For the City Expenses, there is an overall decrease of \$420 thousand and they anticipate substantial savings in the Street Lighting cost. There was some loan cost for the air conditioning unit that will be paid in full by March 2021, so that will be reduced city expense.

The Pension Costs, which represent 32% of all general fund expenditures just behind salaries and wages at almost 44%, so all those combined about 76% of all general fund expenditures are related to personnel. As mentioned, the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) that rate is increasing from 27.75% to 29.5% so that increase is the

6.3% that was mentioned; MERS is all employees except fire, police and judges. Normally, notice of increase comes in late January or early February after the budget is created, the budget would be amended within the first quarter. For this year, it was not done because of the pandemic, cutting the budget and the furloughs, so the increase is based on the adopted budget. The good news is that rate is not going to increase until June of 2022, so they are going to keep it at the 29.5% rate and going into next year for the first couple of months we will have this rate. The Firefighters Retirement System (FRS) rate is going up from 32.25% to 33.75% and it is already factored into the fire department's budget. We received a notice from the Municipal Police Employees' Retirement System (MPERS) a couple of weeks ago that they are decreasing their rate from 33.75% to 29.75 effective July 1, 2021, but they are making changes to their Drop Program. We don't have a financial impact of what those changes are at this time, it could be a wash, or it could increase or decrease. Normally, they don't pay into the system when the employee enters into the Drop but now, they are going to pay into it, so there may be an offset between the reduce rate and the city paying into the plan.

The Enterprise Funds, there are 6 the Airport, Transit, Civic Center, Zoo, Water and Sewer all combined total revenues are \$26.5 million and you got your operating expenses at \$44 million, which include \$11.6 million in depreciation. Your net operating revenue of \$5.8 million and a net capital contribution and transfers of \$11 million for a decrease of net positions for all the funds combined of \$659 thousand.

There are 27 Special Revenue Funds used to account for the proceeds of specific revenue sources other than capital projects. They are legally restricted expenditures for specified purposes. There are descriptions of all the funds in the budget book and they are also in the financial report. All the funds are separate except for the Capital Infrastructure Funds and they are combined for reporting purposes. All combined total revenue for all the special revenue funds is \$27.8 million and total Expenditures of \$15.3 million with a total transfer out of \$11.9 million, so that leaves a total net change in fund balance for all combined of \$654 thousand and that concludes the budget summary.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions for Mr. Richard, there were none.

Mr. Richard noted that he included on the council members agenda the tabs in red are references to the line item details within the budget book.

The Budgets discussed were as follows:

## **HEARING SCHEDULE:**

### **1.) Revenues:**

Chairman Harvey asked if there were any expected revenue forthcoming relative to federal reimbursements, CARES or anything like that we anticipate or reflected in any of these numbers.

Mr. Richard, Budget Supervisor, explained that the budget does not include any grant related revenues, FEMA, CARES or the new stimulus etc. and he's not factoring that in, but they do receive that money and it is just some extra money we can use to spend.

Chairman Harvey noted as we mentioned the word unprecedented and all the different disasters, we have had over the last 12 months, there are expenses we have incurred that we will expect to get reimbursement at some time in the future. He wanted to know if there is any running number of what it is expected to be at any stage and like accrual, are we able to use it at some stage.

Mrs. Stacey Rowell, Director of Administration, explained that we have outstanding FEMA Projects and they can't accrual it until it reaches a certain point with FEMA. A lot that's left right now will be reimbursed back to Capital Infrastructure because we ran those projects through there and they came in after the flood they are still pending. A lot is that reimbursement, most of what comes in was due to the general fund and most has been some pieces that they are still working through. Other than that, we have some that we are working on from Hurricane Laura and we are still in the development stage as far as where our numbers would be on that.

Mayor Ellis wanted to know when the last reimbursement was from Hurricane Katrina.

Mrs. Rowell noted that they haven't closed the project out and as far as getting any money from it no they're not really getting anything from it, they just haven't closed it and that was 2005.

Mayor Ellis noted that he was trying to get the idea in his head as to when those dollars actually flow down to the City, and that it takes a minute.

## 2.) Council

Chairman Harvey noted that there is an increase of \$10,000 which is mostly around the group insurance premium increase. There is a pay increase related to the certification of the internal auditor position and everything else is pretty close in line with where we were last year.

## 3.) Court

Judge Jeff Joyce  
Sarita Smith – Finance Officer

Mrs. Ezernack asked if there were any differences this year as opposed to last year or anything you want to share.

Ms. Smith noted the only difference was an increase for employees for salaries.

Mrs. Rowell, Administrator, noted that she believes that is actually going to be reimbursed to the City and that those are expenses that the court is going to pick up she believe is the way that's scheduled to be.

Ms. Smith said she believe so.

Mrs. Rowell noted that is not an increase to the General Fund and that they do a reimbursement whenever they do. They have funds that have certain expense that they actually reimburse us for and some of those are salary increases. Through the years those accumulate and then they get a bill from us for those and we track them, that is how those will be worked out. They will not be an increase to the General Fund.

Mr. Richard noted this is that part of the salary reimbursement where you see those negatives numbers in their expense column under payroll tax, pension reimbursement and salary.

Chairman Harvey noted we are budgeting the same reimbursement amount, but we won't see an increase there is that correct.

Mr. Richard noted that there are slight changes in their group coverage.

Chairman Harvey noted so the reimbursement doesn't move or doesn't move from 2021 to 2022 it just stays flat.

Mr. Richard said no, there is a worksheet.

Chairman Harvey wanted to know if this is something that is going to move with the dollar amount when it is relative to actual.

Mr. Richard noted that he would have to double check and make sure. It is based on the number of employees they have and there are different raises that have occurred over the years that is also part of that number.

Chairman Harvey asked if there were any other highlights for City Court.

Judge Joyce said no, the going thing is that some of the revenue is going to be down with just the number of tickets that were down. There has been a push to not execute warrants on outstanding tickets or anything you have not wanting to put people in jail. They are not arresting as near as many people and issuing summons instead. If you got a warrant out because you didn't come to court, you probably not going to come to court because you got to issue the summons and they are not going to arrest because of the pandemic.

Chairman Harvey wanted to know who he is referencing when he says "they".

Judge Joyce noted they to be the Sheriff's Department, Monroe Police and OCC say they are not going to take certain people, so you can have an outstanding warrant with us and that would be a potential to get money and when you get pulled over, they run your name and you got a warrant and you need to go to court again because we can't take you to OCC. We don't have any control over it.

Ms. Woods asked if that was because of COVID that they are not taking prisoners.

Judge Joyce said yes.

Mr. Marshall asked if they have considered a payment plan in lieu of.

Judge Joyce said every person he has is on a payment plan and if you keep paying it, he is going to keep giving you time to pay. He doesn't know the other judges' protocol, but he does accept payment and he would rather them pay than spend a night in jail.

Chairman Harvey wanted to know if we knew the number of warrants that have increased or decreased over this period.

Judge Joyce noted that there is probably more of a decrease than anything and many less tickets issues and less arrests made since March than any.

#### **Marshal**

Marshal Robert Cherry

Chief Deputy Marshal Brad Smith

Chairman Harvey asked if the Marshal had any highlights as far as expenditures etc., that they want to highlight.

Marshal Cherry said no, they looked at the budget from last year and it is basically the same.

Mr. Richards noted that they just have some minor changes in pay from people retiring, new marshal and such.

Chairman Harvey asked if Marshal Cherry had any comment on the question, he asked Judge Joyce concerning where we are relative to warrants, if we have seen those stay flat or increase/decrease.

Marshal Cherry noted that they don't have any answer for that, whatever the judge tells them to do they are there to do it.

#### **4.) Mayor**

Mayor Ellis

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know the big difference in this budget for the mayor as opposed to last year.

Mr. Richard noted that with the new administration there were changes in personnel one decrease in executive and trying to fund economic development division. Right now, you have the liaison position, grant writer and economic development officer position that they are working on filling. There is the public relations position that had 3 people and now there is only 1 person. Change in overall budget is about \$68,000.

Chairman Harvey asked if they were changing the grant writer from PUD.

Mr. Richard noted that they unfunded it under PUD and using some of those funds in executive.

Mrs. Rowell noted that is a different type of grant writer position they are still leaving that function in PUD. At this point they wanted to gear it more toward economic development and the mayor asked for a grant writer in addition to be put in his department.

Ms. Woods had a question about summer workers and noted that this is where this typically come from.

Mr. Richard noted that the Green Team funded was under beautification, some under Community Affairs and money under CDBG for summer programs and this budget doesn't have any funding in it for any type of summer program.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if that was typically monies from a grant or what did that money come from for those programs for summer workers?

Mr. Richard noted that the ones funded through CDBG was about \$50,000 and the ones in the General Fund was just funded through General Fund Revenue.

Mrs. Rowell noted that sometimes there were some through the Administrative Economic Development Fund.

Ms. Woods asked so there is no money in this budget at all for summer workers this summer.

Mr. Richard said not in the General Fund Budget.

Mrs. Rowell noted that they put that on hold until they could decide with the pandemic what was safe, and we suspended it last year until we see a little more vaccination programs going on.

Ms. Woods noted that we didn't work any of the summer working last year, right?

Mrs. Rowell said, right and young people are going to be the last ones to get it and we don't know if we will be able to have any type of programs this year or not. If we do, we will seek out funds.

Mayor Ellis noted that you are also seeing this on the school level of parents not sending their kids to school and learning virally, so this year is an interesting year to operate around.

#### 5.) Legal

Angie Sturdivant, City Attorney, noted that the most significant change in the Legal Department budget is addition of a full assistant city attorney, in the Civil Division. We have an increased case load, personnel matters, public records request etc. Mrs. Sturdivant noted that she has mentioned the need for this for several years.

Ms. Woods asked how many attorneys do they have?

Mrs. Sturdivant noted there are 2 in her office and in prosecuting there is 1 full-time prosecutor and 1 part-time prosecutor.

Ms. Woods asked, and you are going to hire another full-time attorney.

Mrs. Sturdivant said yes.

Mr. Marshall asked if she was seeking that position currently?

Mrs. Sturdivant said once this is approved.

All other funds under the direction of the Legal Dept.

Chairman Harvey asked if there were any funds under the direction of the Legal Department namely special revenue funds that we have to covered there.

Mrs. Sturdivant said yes, they have bond forfeiture funds, which are collected when people don't show up for court. That is on hold because it was in the Governor Emergency Orders. We couldn't collect on that and she didn't know if that has been reinstated, it would be very low for this year. There is the Pre-trial Diversion Funds for the Pre-trial Diversion Program for first time defenders with misdemeanor charges if it is not serious and truly their first time. We have a Pre-trial Diversion Program for those individual and those are the funds that support that program.

Chairman Harvey noted so there are no real expenses that come out of that fund.

Mrs. Sturdivant said that right, yes.

#### 6.) Police

Chief Victor Zortan, MPD, noted that pretty much everything remained the same. There were a few little changes in different categories, but for the most part it was the same as last year. We're trying to do a little something to give some of the officer back, if it gets approved through union contracts, some benefits that were taken away from them about 8 or 9 years ago, the longevity pay and first responder pay. It's about \$250 dollars a month and right now you have officer that were hired after 2011 that don't get that and those before do. That was one of the things we tried to get in the budget to help the people and help hiring new people that want to come here. A lot of the same agencies have these same funds for help for their base salary.

Mr. Richard noted their major change was the 2% cost of living raise basically 2021 budget plus cost of living pay.

Mrs. Rowell noted that is mandated for fire and police.

Mr. Marshall asked if those incentive mentioned by Chief Zortan was already included?

Chief Zortan said, yes and they know they have enough to cover it and they were budget.

Ms. Woods wanted to know how many officers are going to be impacted by getting this raise and she thinks it's a great idea.

Chief Zortan noted they have 127 officers right now, so about 70 or 80.

Ms. Woods wanted to now where this money is coming from to make the difference up?

Chief Zortan noted that they played with some of the budget numbers and they are understaffed at 135, they are at 127 and they have some leeway to give this money back to the ones that didn't get it in 2011.

Chairman Harvey asked about the jump in supplies he see like \$40,000 and he was trying to see what account it's hitting.

Mr. Richard noted that he didn't know what account that was originally in, it reverted back to the 2021 budget plus the increase and he don't know where that's budgeted for next year.

Chairman Harvey noted that he sees the increase and he was just curious as to what account it hit. He thought it was \$40,000 difference in just basic supplies, so he didn't know if that was where they were putting it.

Mr. Richard noted if he factored it in on his personnel worksheet then it is part of the salary number and he is not sure where the detail is on that.

All other funds under the direction of the Police Dept.

#### 7.) Public Works

##### a) 6000 Airport Fund

Tom Janway, Director of Public Works, noted that they have a new Airport Director that will be here shortly, and he expect him to take a deep dive into the budget and look at the operations. Mr. Janway was notified Friday about receiving \$1.4 million that can be used for airport operations and debt service etc.

Chairman Harvey asked if it could be used for just about any airport expense or is it tied to a certain use.

Mr. Richard noted that it is not incomed and they haven't accepted it yet.

Mr. Janway said he was just notified that they can apply for it, there is actually 2 grants one is \$24,000 and the other is \$1.4 million. As far as the CARES ACT they received \$2 million last year. The Feds are going to fund the remaining drainage work out at the airport to the tune of \$8.5 million and he has the draft of proposed funding from DOTD for 2021/22 which is \$3.5 million which is going to be the match on the \$8.5 million. They also had about \$900,000 for the primary runway and \$1.6 million for LED work. As we perform those projects, we receive the grants from the FFA and DOTD on that, so he is expecting a big year. Mr. Janway is expecting to finish this current budget year out, but right now both of the projects are shut down because of the weather. We have a \$12 million runway project that they are currently doing and a 3.5 million drainage project and on top of that another \$12 million worth of work at the airport. We got a good program manager at the FAA and our consultant has been doing a great job. Overall, for projecting revenues we showed a slight decrease in projections for the up coming budget year. We shut down the airport bar and restaurant, those are not money makers and the number of passengers going through the airport prior to the freeze we were running between 40 and 45 percent and we expect that to increase significantly throughout 2021. That account for rental car fees and passenger facility fees etc., it does impact the revenue at the airport so it's good to see we are going to be getting some additional funds.

On Expenditures Mr. Janway noted that the fire department has a part of that, and it basically increased a little bit and that is for our ARF Station. The salaries and wages and what we got right now the overall total won't change but that may be a fluid number when the new Director gets. Right now, we have no permanent employees on the outside of the airport. He has hired a new maintenance supervisor and he will get with the new Director as to what he needs as far as getting the work done. Mr. Janway doesn't expect any changes in that area.

Mr. Richard noted that he wanted to add that Mr. Janway noted decreasing in revenues and if you notice there is \$8.1 million that is including \$2.5 million in Capital contribution and we normally don't budget for that and it really shouldn't be in there. If you take that out that figure drops to \$5.6 million verse the \$6 million and that is where he is referencing the decrease in airport revenue.

Chairman Harvey noted that was his question the biggest thing stood out and he didn't know if that was going to be and usually when you see something like that you are expecting to see some kind of project that's going to pull it down.

Mr. Richard noted that Capital contributions is a result of capitalizing projects and it creates an entry after the year and just hits that account.

Mr. Janway noted that is he expecting that number if we have some good weather to go up substantially and based on what Dan said that's fine and that's what happens when you combine capital and operating funds. Everything else is pretty much routine on the budget.

Ms. Woods inquired about the part on the Art Gallery.

Mr. Janway noted that the person that initiated that is no longer there and that expense was primarily for insurance for the art.

Ms. Woods wanted to know what they are going to do with the art that's there now.

Mr. Janway noted that as long the artist want's the art displayed, they are happy to do it.

Chairman Harvey asked about the construction and project cost we have there in 20/21 he saw 1.83 and it is down to 400 this year. He wanted to know if this just floats up as projects come in.

Mr. Janway noted that is Engineering Services and at the next council meeting he will be putting forth another task order for the final design on all that drainage and that will change that number substantially.

Mrs. Rowell noted it's going to flow with the construction projects.

b) 6001 Transit Fund

Marc Keenan, Transit Director, noted that they are presenting a \$6.9 million budget off of transit and of that \$847,000.67 is depreciation. The budget will be pretty much the same as last year's budget, the only changes are \$1.5 million to purchase 3 heavy duty buses, \$1.1 million to begin replacement of the new terminal. Other than, that the budget is like last years.

Mrs. Ezernack noted that on the revenue side of it she knows they didn't collect any revenue for the bus riders during a specific time, but we are collecting that now is that correct.

Mr. Keenan said that is correct and that from mid-March to late September fair collection did stop and it ended up being a 67% decrease in fairs for the year. We did get CARES ACT money to counter act the decrease in revenue, we are back to where we were.

Chairman Harvey noted that 2020 actual is \$441,000 and we are budgeting for \$500,000 in fare revenue, so are we expecting the ridership to increase at that level or what.

Mr. Keenan, noted that is what the expectation was but since the Coronavirus things have changed, ridership has decreased by 40% and we continue to provide the same type of service. It's just during the coronavirus time ridership has decreased.

Mrs. Rowell noted that there is some increase in revenue at this point.

Mr. Keenan, noted that fair rates went up about 20%

Mrs. Ezernack asked if those fares would have been back before 2020.

Mrs. Rowell noted that the 2020 actuals has some of the decrease when we had stop collecting around March and April decline and compared to the 390 of 2020 actual then 500 could be a reasonable number.

Chairman Harvey noted that he would assume the expenses would stay the same in that scenario, so that would become a plug from the General Fund if we didn't capture that revenue.

Mr. Richard noted that they have some additional if you look at federal grant 2.5 to 3.2 and you are going to see some increases again in group insurance, pension is going to increase.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if they are expecting to see some additional in that CARES money.

Mr. Keenan noted that he knows that they are voting next Friday or Tuesday on some CARES funding and he is not sure if that will come to transportation or how much. They did have an allocation about a month ago and the only agency in Louisiana that received anything was in New Orleans. Transit didn't get any of that, so maybe the second time around they may receive some, not sure.

Mr. Richard noted there is an increase in the general fund of about \$100,000 transfer in number.

Chairman Harvey noted that we are doing that with almost another \$800,000 or so in federal funding.

Mr. Keenan said yes and more than likely that's to match the work done on the terminal.

Ms. Woods asked if they were still limited to the number of people that can ride the bus at one time.

Mr. Keenan said that is correct and that their number is 16, based on the Governor's latest order.

Mr. Marshall asked if they are still anticipating the advertising and promotion to be consistent with what it has been.

Mr. Keenan said that is correct, they do have a plan in place.

Mayor Ellis noted that the benches look great and Mr. Keenan said that the program is going great and no complaints from the citizens.

Public Works Director's Budget:

Mr. Janway noted that the change is in the pump station maintenance and everything else is the same.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know why we would be reducing.

Mr. Janway noted that what they generally do is budget \$100,000 and then when we have to make repairs if substantial he would normally take it to CIC and get them to pay for larger repairs and pay for the smaller repairs out of this budget.

Chairman Harvey noted that we are still looking at about \$300,000 each year in that account and that was one of our challenges last year, \$310,000 was still realized in that account and here we are again at \$100,000 and he is not sure where we are looking at landing this year.

Mr. Janway noted that we are at about \$170,000 and what he will do is periodically get back through those numbers and look for anything larger than about \$25,000 and get with Ms. Golden and Stacey to see if we can get CIC to pay for this.

Mrs. Rowell noted that conversation is being held like they have generator redundancy plan in place with CIC and they have had discussions that we need to look at the pump station replacement plan and start trying to see if we can find that funding in CIC to replace some older things.

Mayor Ellis noted that we have specialize products, contractors and you find yourself in these emergency situations, so he tasked Ms. Golden to look for a lift station redundancy plan and backup power like that to take a systematic approach to finding backup pump generators, the main ones. Same way with the hurricane that came through, we had to go out for generators so what we are doing is taking a systematic approach to this to say where are our biggest offenders. What you will start to see once you start making 3 or 4 repairs to one of these old redundant generators you are going to see you could have probably replaced it. That is what we are in the process of doing right now to have Ms. Golden take a look at all the ones that are repeat offenders.

Mrs. Roshonda Gospel, Sanitation Division, noted the most significant change in the sanitation budget is the 16 full-time employees in garbage and trash that were hired and other than that the budget is identical.

Mayor Ellis commented Mrs. Gospel and others for pulling their weight during this ice storm.

Mrs. Ezernack noted as far as head count and so forth some of the full-time truck drivers etc. were cut.

Mrs. Gospel said those were vacant positions and had been on the books for a long time.

c) 6006 Water Fund

Mr. Sean Benton, Water Superintendent.

Mr. Janway noted that they did an outstanding job on controlling our water supply during the snow and ice event, we didn't have to go on a boil notice, we didn't cut anybody off, everybody had the same pressure and we didn't run out of water.

Ms. Woods wanted to commend public works water distribution department for doing an outstanding job. She prides herself when she talks about the City of Monroe that we have good water, were consistent with good water and that she had never known us to have a boil advisory. In the mist of everything that went on last week, we never got to that point, so thank you for all the work you do for this city.

Mrs. Ezernack agrees and appreciate him taking her calls and helping out during this time to explain what was going on and she is sure the citizen appreciated it too.

Mr. Benton noted that this process really gets us in the position of what we just came through, the annual budgets we do every year and also bring stuff before the city council as a whole. This process every year coming to you all with an idea of what we are going to put in place as far as back up generators at remote stations and had we lost power we would have had an opportunity to fire up our generators in which that project was completed two year ago. Our water fund balance gives us an opportunity to stagger projects at the same time to be able to sustain any damages coming through. The proposed budget we have today mirrors our current as we move forward and the only thing different is in the distribution area, we added in the communication area a \$150,000 which has to do with the current water meters. This storm gave us an opportunity to showcase stuff we already invested in as a whole, like the water meters and we notice that we were able to respond faster to leaks to cut down on the demand for water itself, so the system works and is reading properly, etc. We did a leak report and it showed that we had 1900 meters leaking at one time and because the system was working and with the new Ion Water APP out their currently giving the people an opportunity to see what they are using. We only had 100 people sign up, now we have 500 and a number of requests pending, so the budget is the same and it gives us an opportunity to continue doing what we been doing. On the water treatment side, we didn't do anything different because we are also looking at the plant expansion project that will come before council shortly. Moving forward on the distribution side we did identify some projects we can always address through water capital to run itself, so it wasn't an impact on our operating budget.

Chairman Harvey noted that the revenue change year over year and 15.4 was budgeted in 2021 and we are at 13.7 this year, but this up coming year is closer to the 2020 and he was trying to understand the increase year over year.

Mr. Richard noted that in 2021, he did the revenue estimate and found that his numbers were overstated.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if this reflect any difference in what the contract looks like with Greater Ouachita and how that's going to play out.

Mr. Benton noted by looking on this budget sheet you are looking at sales outside bulk water uses the current adopted budget is at \$5 million and moving forward we are looking at \$2.9 million. He is estimating a \$2 million hit they will take by losing Greater Ouachita, so they have been looking at other creative way to move forward in the future on how to pick that revenue back up. We will take a hit once they get off our system as far as in delivery and in operation cost he thinks we are going to gain, so it is a little hard to see right now but we will see it later down the line.

Mrs. Ezernack noted the \$5 million number you had in there that you said was maybe incorrect, that was an overstatement.

Mr. Benton said yes and maybe it's better than that and that's what we are hoping.

d) 6008 Sewer Fund

Charles Westrom, Sewer Manager, noted that our Pre-Treatment Department has been doing an excellent job and they have increased the revenue for tie in fees under revenue that is conservatively estimated to be \$35,000 that we didn't have before. The downside of this is our revenues are based on water usage and in general from the 2020 year forward our usage has been down so our revenues are down. Overall, we are down close to \$225,000 where we were in 2019, so there are no real changes other than that. There is depreciation in there which affects \$4,800,000 worth of deprecation showing up there. At the plant, supplies in chemical budget has gone up, chemicals that we disinfect the waste water with simply cost more, also our landfill operation going to the dump with sludge has gone up, it is \$40,000 a year at present and these are the changes from last year's budget.

Chairman Harvey noted that they are seeing a \$.5 million hit to the fund balance for this and is this something we expect to continue to run those kinds of numbers.

Mrs. Rowell noted that this is why your revenues are down if usage is down, his revenue is down, so some of that is going to be because of revenue being decreased, but fortunately they have a fund balance that can sustain a little bit of a hit as long as it is not long term.

Chairman Harvey noted what we are seeing here is exclusive to revenue and he wanted to know if all that is driven by just usage.

Mr. Westrom noted that you have to keep in mind how much depreciation is because that money is not really being put back toward use like normal depreciation would be, it is just being taken out of the fund balance.

e) 7002 Central Shop

Mr. Janway, Public Works Director, noted that this is the internal service fund which is the central maintenance operation where they repair anything from weed eaters, to heavy trucks, track holes and tractors etc., it is just a flow through account. It is subsidized from the general fund to the tune of \$300 to \$400,000 a year and this current year it was about 300 plus thousand. At some point we might want to readjust our shop rates, these rates are \$55.00 an hour and if you go to any shop around town you are going to pay \$125.00 an hour. This would save the general fund a little money because the Enterprise Fund would be paying more of it.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know have we studied a plan like that for the future of what he is talking about.

Mrs. Rowell noted we are just moving into this Enterprise Agreement and she would like to see how that is going to affect our repairs and see what affect that is on the shop. At that point the shop will serve, because we will still a shop have services to maintain the large garbage and trash fleet as well as equipment. As we move through this agreement they will start being under warranty and go back to shops servicing warranty. How that will affect the shop and its expenses overall is what remains to be seen, and at what level we will have to maintain certain things at the shop.

All other funds under the direction of Public Works

8.) Fire

Chief Terry Williams, Fire Chief, noted that they have 192 employees and the budget is pretty much the same. They have had some challenges this year with a number of employees with COVID this year around 35 or 37 and struggling with their overtime line because of so many employees off and having to cover these employees. We have a recruit academy going right now with 15 recruits, we have tried to seek as much relief with Ms. Doretha Bennett at Workforce Development. She did a great job helping us out and she saved us around \$150,000, so that will be reflected in our current budget. We have upgraded a lot of equipment and purchased new trucks and one new truck is still in production, a latter truck and council approved a command/rehab being built in Wisconsin at this time and we expect to receive that truck around May. We have a substantial completion date of the 25<sup>th</sup> of February and because of the weather they didn't get a chance to do any work, hopefully by the end of next month it will be done, it is a good project but it is moving slow. This is pretty much all that is going on and trying to be good team players.

Mayor Ellis noted that these are men and women who run toward problems and put their lives on the line, and he appreciate them all and their efforts in working, so hats off to you and your crew.

Chief Williams noted he has to give the mayor his props too because like he said it's teamwork and he has to thank the council as well and it is about all of us coming together and making it happen.

All other funds under the direction of the Fire Dept.

9.) Engineering

Arthur Hollands, Project Manager

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know what's different and what's new.

Mr. Hollands noted that looking over the budget he sees one change, we have one cut in the GIS, CAD Support Position and that is about it in engineering. We are trying to keep our budget the same and we have been doing that continuously for the last several years.

Chairman Harvey noted that you guys are another one that didn't move much from year to year.

Mr. Holland noted that they try to work with what they have, but they get a lot done.

Ms. Woods asked if that one cut was just a position on the books and you took it off.

Mr. Holland said no, they had several other positions they removed as well, but that is one they are just cutting back to stay within their budget.

Ms. Woods asked so no one lost a job.

Mr. Hollands noted that they double up on things when they need to get things done.

Mrs. Rowell noted that no one lost their job.

a) 2021 Capital Infrastructure

All other funds under the direction of the Engineering Dept.

10.) Community Affairs

Doug Seegers, Community Affairs Director, noted that they have cut numerous positions.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if these were place holder type positions.

Mr. Richard said yes, they are all vacant. They changed some description and added some other positions.

Mr. Seegers noted that they did a little reorganization of Community Affairs and the most significant was in Parks and Recreation with the new Parks and Beautification Director and Community Center Programming Director. We separated that roll into two and made some adjustments in operations there that will be a little more efficient. It will also allow us to increase our programs and do a lot more for the community also along that line we added a position that hasn't been filled yet, we are still looking for the correct person or the right person and that's the horticultural position to work hard on some more beautification efforts.

Mayor Ellis noted that he commends Mr. Seegers on this and from him just driving around you have done more with less. He further noted that he looks forward to seeing what you guys have coming.

Mr. Seegers noted that's part of the team that has been out there with Ray Wright and his group and getting that group going with Patience Talley and the community centers. The golf courses are looking a lot better, if you ride around and see everything looking better that's Don Walters taking care of that. The museum as you know has been closed, but we are getting there and next week we are getting ready for the Jury Competition out at the African American Museum, partnering with them and we are thrill about that and we will also have a display.

Mr. Marshall noted that he has seen the work on the baseball fields as well.

Mr. Seegers noted that Mr. Wright and his team really have a lot of work going on and there are some improvements that need to be done and some investments on those fields to get them back up to par.

Mayor noted that Carroll and Wossman now have lights on their fields.

Mr. Seegers said Carroll almost, but we are getting there. Carroll has not had lights on their field, and we will have lights on their field by the time they have their first home opener.

Mrs. Dawson noted that she thinks the reorganization was one of the best ideas you have had since you started outside of what I need you to do for district 5, but you can really tell the difference in things getting done quickly than what it was in the past.

Mr. Seegers noted about the Zoo that they just got the grant from the CVB and they are excited about that and the improvements that will be coming to the Zoo.

Ms. Woods noted that we are looking forward to some great things in district 3 and we had talked about a lot and I know you just need time and with the fact that you are doing something with the golf course and making the greens look better etc., that's a good thing. Ms. Woods noted that she is excited and thanked Mr. Seegers for the partnership with the African American Museum. She further noted that she would love to see how the city could incorporate mowing the lawn out there at the museum, because it's out there in Chennault and she know they have had talks concerning restrictions.

Mr. Seegers noted that they have some restrictions and he would love to help, and maybe they can work their way towards there, he is not sure.

Ms. Woods noted that she would love to see them help with that because this museum struggles and it is such a great museum and in a great location. Ms. Woods noted that she is open to try to make that happen.

Mrs. Ezernack noted that she wanted to know about the work they are going to do with the ball field because she has some funding, and she would like to use it toward it and Mr. Wright said he will let her know.

Mr. Seegers noted that last week put them behind and some of the field may not be quite ready.

Mayor Ellis asked not to forget about the strength of this community and putting out there what you need, just got gloves, balls and bats for Carroll and Wossman from ULM and all you had to do was ask, people are willing and ready.

Mr. Seegers noted that we have a great partnership with Monroe Youth Baseball, and he thinks that will continue to grow in the future.

Mayor Ellis commended Ms. Patience Talley and her crew for what they did.

Ms. Woods wanted to thank Mr. Seegers for all of his efforts with the cleanup and beautifying of Monroe, because we have definitely seen an increase in those and the participation from people in the community. She also noted to Ms. Talley that she is looking forward to working with her as well.

a.) 6002 Civic Center Fund

Dr. Cannon, Civic Center Director, noted that it has been a challenging year, they were pleased that the auditors believed that we did do a good job of managing the resources that we had. What I am most proud about is when I look at the number of events that were cancelled this year and looking at the number today it was \$590,000 we don't count those we never saw or didn't come because we were closed. We would have had a better year our staff has been really busy and we have been booking people and canceling and booking and canceling and our goal is when we finally take off again we won't have an empty slate we will have future events coming up, so that will reduce the amount of time it will take for us to get up to full steam again. That is where we are, and we have several projects on the drawing board.

b.) 6003 Purchase Garden & Zoo Fund

Mr. Tom Pearson, Zoo Director, noted that they have so much going on definitely a team effort, so much involvement from the community. I have been a volunteer at the Zoo for over a decade and now in a paid position for just a few months. It is incredible how many businesses and individuals just keep coming to me saying they want to give and as the mayor said earlier the influx of the public and how they want to help and get involved. The Parrakeets is going to be a new exhibit we haven't had it before, pretty inexpensive to build and we already have all the donation, it didn't cost the Zoo or the City a penny even the birds were donated. We have gotten over \$5,000 sponsorship on birds and it has really been amazing. We're working on replacing all the benches and we have people sponsored 16 so far, so the support of the community has been great. We now have a master plan and the CVB saw that we were going to make some changes and so we have a master plan that covers 10 years in four phases. Phase 1 is a two-year plan that redoes the LA Purchase Exhibit fully funded for year one and year 2 may be a little difficult, we want to do a lot more animal encounters we will sell popsicles sticks with seeds glues on them and will cost us one penny to make and we plan on selling them

for about \$1.50 and conservatively we plan to make about \$150,000 a year feeding birds. We also want to get the Giraffes back and feed them and he is working on trying to get some sloths and maybe feeding the alligators, a farm yard to feed the goats and every time you feed them that is more revenue for the Zoo. My goal as Director is to break even and we really believe we can get that back to black.

Mr. Marshall wanted to applaud Mr. Pearson's on his vision and listening to everything lets him further know that the Zoo is headed in the right direction. He noted that he appreciates everything that Mr. Pearson and his staff is doing.

Mayor Ellis noted that as a business owner you are going to put effort in the people walking through our doors, we got to figure that out, how do we market them and how do we make it a draw like it is and that goes back to knowing you business, driving revenue and people will fill that and that's one of our jobs as a city to not only put people in place but put people in place with a passion that Mr. Pearson has and this team that we have assembled along with the team that's sitting out in front of you today, we got good people.

Mr. Pearson noted that from what he can tell attendance is up at the Zoo.

Mrs. Dawson noted that she is thankful and peacock proud about the Zoo attendance on Halloween because from her understanding that was the biggest crowd the Zoo has had.

Mr. Pearson noted that he has never seen anything like it.

Mrs. Dawson noted that she is looking forward to more big events like that.

Mrs. Ezernack noted that the enthusiasm your team has for what they are doing shines out and that will bring us the success we need, so continue what you are doing to draw the attention there and we can only benefit from that as a community.

Ms. Woods thanked Mr. Pearson and noted that his energy is out the roof and that she is excited.

#### All other funds under the direction of Community Affairs

##### 11.) Planning & Urban Development (PUD)

Ellen Hill, PUD Director, noted that they didn't have anything new and as a department they are still focusing on professional development and working toward as many staff members earning professional certification, so you would see that there is money budgeted in every division for training, travel although limited because of COVID, but that allow for more training online.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if they are able to fill more positions in the inspection division and where are we with that.

Mr. Hill noted that she is happy to introduce to you Jack, the full-time chief building official, he is also an architect by profession and working toward earning that CBO. He came to us as an architect he could immediately go out and do inspections and signoff. He has been working hard, he has interviewed someone for the electrical position, right now we don't have a specific electrical inspector. Based on what I see other cities doing best practices you really don't hire a single inspector; you really look for a combination of inspectors or another CBO. We have been talking about how we get to that and maximizing our dollars and allow us to do more things. We are also working on the transition of the new software MyGov where we will get to that one stop at least online for now and by the end of summer we will be ready to pilot it.

Mayor Ellis noted that you have done a good job with talks with the City of Ruston who has this implemented and we are getting great feed back with contractors and people there. Also talking about the ease and speed of doing business and Ruston has opened their doors to us to learn. He also believes that MyGov will be a tool to help the consumer to pay things online and gives a check list of contractors and what to expect and whose hands it's in and where it is in the process.

##### a) 2001 Community Development Block Grant

Jawaun Downs, CDBG, noted that they don't have any new major changes other than adding a full-time position which they haven't filled for a Neighborhood Revitalization Coordinator as well as making our Compliance Research Coordinator from part-time to full-time due to the additional funds received from COVID. Those are new rules and guidelines that we have to adhere to and make sure that we are on top of those things.

Mrs. Dawson wanted to know if that new position is posted already?

Mrs. Downs said it was posted in September.

Mrs. Ezernack thanked them for the great job they have been doing and those you have really reached with the programs you put forth and with the monies, it has been fantastic.

Mrs. Downs noted that they are about to start round 5 for rental assistance and mortgage assistance, they will be making that announcement pretty soon.

Ms. Woods echoed Mrs. Ezernack's comments because they have done a great job and it's really making a difference in the community and she appreciate that when you start talking about home ownership. It really is home ownership verses what she calls rental with all these other companies going to these developments and you are paying rent for 20 years before you can even start to look at going toward the mortgage. You all are doing something that make people homeowners from the beginning, so thank you.

Mrs. Downs noted that is what the Neighborhood Revitalization Coordinator's position will be responsible for, which is the Home in Monroe Program.

All other funds under the direction of PUD

BREAK:

#### 12.) Administration

Mrs. Stacey Rowell, Director of Administration

Mr. Dan Richard, Budget Supervisor

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know the synopsis on this.

Mrs. Rowell explained that they have some IT expense increased cost built in there.

Mr. Richard noted that IT is cutting out an intern position, accounting is cutting one of their part-time accounting position, Tax and Revenue, Property Tax Specialist, they have off loaded the property tax responsibility to Ouachita Parish, that position was really not needed and it has been phased out. So, other than the increase in IT cost the other divisions are pretty much consistent with their last year's budget.

All other funds under the direction of the Admin Dept.

#### 13.) City Expense

Mrs. Stacey Rowell, Director of Administration

Mr. Dan Richard, Budget Supervisor, noted as he mentioned in the summary, they anticipate some reductions in street lighting.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know what is that?

Mrs. Rowell explained that they are looking at trying to get some grants from the Public Service Commission to replace some lighting LED Light.

Mayor Ellis noted if you have noticed the difference on the interstate and a lot of our main corridors every one of those lights are burning right now minus the ones that have to have a structural change to them.

Mrs. Rowell noted that hopefully we can replace those and reduce our cost plus just going back through some accounts and making sure that the lights that we are paying for are only on city property.

Ms. Woods noted that she gets confused with this because on Hwy 165 north, those light along that corridor of 165 is that city's property or parish?

Mr. DJ Fortenberry explained that the city owns about 450 lights up and down I-20 and 165 and then here in front of Lea Joyner overpass in front of the Civic Center. The lights that are 165 south to the new lights that

was just installed last year and then everything north of that all the way to Century Link the City of Monroe Owns.

Ms. Woods noted so from 165 to Desiard Street does the city own those?

Mr. Fortenberry said yes.

Ms. Woods noted that those lights are that soft pink, so we are looking at replacing those with the LED.

Mr. Fortenberry explained that there are two kinds of lights on the interstate and if you are coming from I-20 east into the city and the light in the median those lights are high pressure sodium and once you get to 165 west on the exterior part that is a different light one burns orange and one burns blue. The blue is what we are supposed to switch to. The LED is what we are switching to due to cost. The estimated cost to change out all those lights is \$250,000 for the 450 lights up and down which will be a cost saving of about a 1/3 of what we are paying on those 450 lights.

Ms. Woods wanted to know when we are doing this?

Mrs. Rowell noted that we are trying to get the grant.

Mayor Ellis noted that we spend a lot of time looking for efficiencies as a City that we can go through because lighting was one of the things from our constituent on how can we get more lighting and better lighting through the districts.

Mrs. Rowell noted that the City of Monroe has more lights per square mile than most cities and they are streetlights not security lights.

A Public Hearing & final adoption of the budget must occur no later than the April 13, 2021 Council Meeting. (City Charter, Article V, Sec. 5-01)

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m. upon motion of Mrs. Dawson and seconded by Ms. Woods.

Douglas Harvey  
Chairman

Carolus S. Riley  
Council Clerk

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 minutes.