

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
February 27, 2024
6:00 p.m.

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

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

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

There was absent: None.

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

The Invocation was led by Engineering Department Project Manager Mr. Arthur Holland.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Harvey thanked everyone that check on him post-surgery and he said things are going well.

Ms. Woods said good evening and she said it is good to everybody. She said she has been in and out, however, she does have allergies that she is suffering with today. She took the opportunity to congratulate the Renaissance Committee, of which Mr. Herb Guillory is Chair for a beautiful Renaissance parade and she said it was truly one that should go down in the history books. She stated she thinks the City is getting better with the parade because there are more float entries and more participation. She said you couldn't have ordered a better day for the weather, and it was beautiful. She thanked Mr. Phillips from the Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo that took his personal trailer and built her a float to be up close and personal with the people on the parade route.

(Ms. Dawson arrived at the City Council meeting at 6:02 pm.)

Mr. Marshall said good evening to everyone, and he announced the District 4 Community Engagement meeting is tomorrow, February 28, 2024, at the Emily P. Robinson Recreation Center at 5:30 pm. He said District 4's first community cleanup for the year will be March 16, 2024, at 9:00 am and it will start on the corner of South 8th and Orange Street. He congratulated Mr. Guillory and the Renaissance Committee on a beautiful parade on Saturday. He said was very attentive and he believes everyone had fun. He thanked the Renaissance Committee for putting in the time and effort to do the parade each year.

Mrs. Dawson thanked everyone for being in attendance and she stated the Community Cleanup mentioned by Mr. Marshall will be for District 4 and 5 on March 16. She said they look forward to all the residents coming out to help continue to make our city a clean place to live. She thank Mr. Guillory and she said she enjoyed herself on Saturday everything was beautiful, and she was so happy to be a part of the parade. She stated the citizens had so much fun and she has heard nothing but great feedback. She said for the Renaissance Committee to continue to do what they do every year, and she will continue to support even if she is not in it.

Mayor Friday Ellis echoed the sentiments of the Council to Mr. Guillory and the Renaissance Committee, and he stated it was a good weekend with a beautiful event put on. He noted the Martin Luther King Birthday Salute was well attended and another great event that the City puts on to shine a spotlight on people doing wonderful things in our community. He said the Parkview street improvement is groundbreaking which is a mile worth of mill and overlay. He said that they went in and cleaned out all the subsurface drainage before and looked at any problems that the City may have. He said that it will be a temporary inconvenience for parents, schools, and school buses getting back and forth, but we still look forward to the improved road conditions. He also acknowledged Megan Risinger, Grant Writer, on a job well done on the East Street sidewalks that will connect in front of Wossman and around the school district through there. He said that it's a great project to add to the many others that the City is working on. He said that if we know someone that is a real estate agent or someone that is in the banking industry the Real Estate

Broker and Commercial have quarterly meet ups, to where they meet with real estate agents to understand why the people are moving into to our community and why people are moving out of our community, which is a great feedback loop for the City, especially when it comes from some of the clients that they represent that may represent other companies looking to move here as well. He said that it is a great way for us to answer questions and stay in touch with our real estate community. He said that Councilwoman Ezernack was a part of this one as well and she provided a lot of great feedback. He said that he got another opportunity to welcome the next class of Leadership Ouachita. He said that if you haven't attended that and want to be a participate, he highly encourages others to do so. He said that you will learn about why our community is special and all the people who help make it special. He said that when a lot of folks start this program and when they came out on the other side of the program it gave them a better appreciation for their community more when they went in. He said that they had their final meeting to the Louisiana Economic Development Ready Community. He said that it was a yearlong process of meeting with business owners, stake holders throughout the community to discuss ways that we as the City can be more responsive to development needs and this is a great designation for our city, we will be one of the cities within the State of Louisiana that has that designation as a development ready community. He said what this means is when you have potential prospects that look throughout your city, this is one of the things that they know that we went through this process. He said that Development is ready to put speed to market now, if developers want to put sticks in the air they know that these communities have been through that process they understand the needs of development. On another note, the Mayor noted the State of the City, March 3, 2024, the viewing times are 7:30am on KNOE/CBS, 10:30am on KARD and KNOE/CW, 5:30pm and 10:00pm on KAQY/ABC, and 10:30pm, on KTVE. He said this is another opportunity for our community to see some great people in our community doing great things. He further noted the State of the City focuses on residents who feel the impact of those projects and plans that the City is working on, and they tell you their side of the story and how its effected their daily lives. He said that it's a great way to inspire you about some things that are happening within the City and it's a great way for you to see the box top of the puzzle to see the direction in which the city is moving in and what the future looks like for the City of Monroe.

Mrs. Ezernack said earlier in the year she stated this is the year of kindness, caring, and peace and we need to all spread that to others. She further stated to remember if we do that it will be much easier for us to work together for the betterment of our families, community, and nation. She congratulated Mr. Marshall for his award at the MLK Birthday Salute and she is happy he was recognized for all he does for his community. She noted she was also in the Renaissance parade on Saturday, and she thanked Mr. Guillory and the committee. She further noted it was wonderful and it would not be her last time to go. She said it was a special day and the weather you could not have even asked for that kind of weather and gotten it.

Upon a motion of Mr. Marshall and seconded by Mr. Harvey, the minutes of the Legal and Regular session of February 13, 2024, were unanimously approved. (Ms. Woods abstained. She was not present at the last City Council meeting.) (There were no public comments).

PRESENTATION:

North Delta Regional Planning & Dev. Dist., Inc.
Ouachita Council of Government (OCOG)
Safe Streets of All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan

Ms. Celine Flores Robinson, 411 East Ironwood Drive West, Monroe, stated the overarching objective of the plan is to develop a comprehensive safety strategy to mitigate roadway fatalities and serious injuries in Ouachita Parish. She said they have been working on an action plan with consultants and in October they had a kickoff envisioning meeting with Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee. She said had a first round public engagement round table where they had a survey and three successful pop up events. She said the feedback that was received facilitated discussions on behavioral concerns such as poor roadway designs, unsafe intersections, lack of lighting, and issues related to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. She said they are starting their second round of public engagement and having more stakeholder meetings in March. She noted on the website at Northdelta.org/survey the survey will be available starting tomorrow February 28 and it will go through March 10th. She said that it is a much shorter timeframe this time around because the SS4A came out recently for FY2024 and the deadline for the Implementation Grant is May 16, 2024, so this action plan will be completed before the

deadline. She said that if the City is interested in those Implementation dollars the action plan needs to be completed per the deadline. She said that the survey is on their website, and she issued out flyers that have the QR code that will take you right to it and it has all the information. She asked if the City would share with the public to participate in the survey. She said that they want to hear everyone's feedback and concerns. She said this part of the survey will dive deeper into the strategies and recommendations of project areas on some of the concerns that they heard in the first round. She said that this is more of a technical look at the action plan.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted clarification on the dates for the survey.

Ms. Robinson noted until March 10, 2024, and it will all be on their website. She further noted she will be sharing more information, if anyone needs anything going forward please let her know.

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Council:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8672 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin City Art Foundation (Reception: 61st Annual Juried Competition) at the Masur Museum of Art pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments).

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8673 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin City Art Foundation (Off the Wall Annual Fundraiser) at the Masur Museum of Art pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments).

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8674 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Northeast Louisiana Children's Coalition for the Annual Dragon Boat Festival pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments).

Department of Administration:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to consider one (1) Renewal Application for a New 2024 Class A Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no public comments).

Department of Planning & Urban Development:

Upon motion Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8675 authorizing an Agreement between the City of Monroe and Quest 4 Success, Inc. in the amount of \$100,000.00 from HOME – American Resue Plan (ARP) Funds and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments).

Mrs. Ezernack wanted someone for PUD to give a brief synopsis about this exciting project.

Ms. Ellen Hill, Director of Planning & Urban Development, said this is one of the City's projects thanks to the City Council's adoption of Our Home Rescue Plan funds and it allowed the City to partner with developers that are looking to develop rental housing for affordable housing. She said the City was approached by a nonprofit that has been in the housing but have also pursued funding through Louisiana Housing Corporation to develop rental housing. She said this is an opportunity to partner with them, put in a little bit of money, and the result will be four brand new single family homes available to rent in the Booker T. community for low to moderate income families.

Ms. Woods thanked Mr. and Mrs. Moore for their investment in the Booker T. community and District 3. She said if there is anything she can do to be of assistance she is more than willing to be there for them.

Mayor's Office:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8676 authorizing to apply for \$25,000,000 in funding from the United States Department of Transportation for the South Monroe Corridor Improvement Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mrs. Dawson and Mr. Harvey stated they are very excited about this project.

Mayor Ellis noted this project is a RAISE Grant application for the South 2nd Corridor for 25 million dollars with no local match. He further noted tonight the Council is approving any overages and the round of applications came back, and the City was scored highly favorable. He said the City was told to gather more community information and re-total the City's benefit cost analysis. He said the application deals with enhanced safety, drainage, beautification, sidewalk protection, pedestrian protection, and bicycle protection. He stated it is a wonderful project for our community and the City has been lobbying really hard for the last two years for this project.

Fire Department:

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8677 authorizing the City of Monroe to apply for and accept an Assistance to Firefighters Grant from FEMA for Defibrillators and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8678 authorizing the City of Monroe to apply for an accept an Assistance to Firefighters Grant from FEMA for Positive Pressure Ventilation fans and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mrs. Ezernack noted both items a and b (Fire Department) are very exciting projects for our community.

Engineering Services:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8679 authorizing a designated city representative to execute Change Order No. One (1) for the Chennault Golf Course Irrigation Pump Improvements Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted an update to know where the City is on this project.

Mr. Aruther Holland, Project Manager, stated this is an irrigation pump that the City purchased, and this contract involves the installation of the pump. He said the start up on the pump was yesterday and the change order for electrical work the City did some improvements. He said the City put a shed over the pump, added additional lighting, and relocated the electrical panel from the outside and put it under the shed. He said this was not a part of the original contract, but the City had enough funds in the contract that this change order is no cost. He said they are mainly asking for the additional 30 days.

Ms. Woods clarified the City is mainly asking for 30 days but everything is in place. She wanted to know if the project is complete.

Mr. Holland noted the project is complete but the problem the City is having is the pump is being hooked to an old system. He said when they started it up there were three blow outs and now the City has to make repairs to do a second startup to show that the pump can do what it is designed to do.

Mayor Ellis noted one thing a golf course needs to have is an irrigation system but that irrigation system has been gone for ages. He said then add a long drought and a severe freeze to your greens and it doesn't do any good. He further noted the old pump dredged from the bottom and would always have to send PD divers down there to check but this pump pulls from the surface. He said whenever the sorority golf tournaments happen there will be happy golfers out there.

Ms. Woods said they won't be pinking on the ground, but they will be pinking on the greens.

Mr. Holland said the City is trying to create green grass.

Ms. Woods noted they are elated.

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8680 authorizing a designated city representative to sign and execute a Superseding Agreement between the Department of Transportation and Development and the City of Monroe for the Jackson Street Corridor Enhancement Route US 165 Business Project (H.007530) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mrs. Dawson stated she is super-duper excited about this project because when she got into office she remember having multiple conversations and community meetings about Jackson Street. She said now since this project is happening it makes her very happy, and they have really been needing sidewalks especially with the ADA enhancements for the community on Jackson Street.

Mayor Ellis noted Winnsboro Road will follow this project in about 2 months.

Mrs. Ezernack stated another exciting project.

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8681 approving Change Order No. Eight (8) for the Kansas Lane Ext (Old Sterlington-US 165) Phase 1 Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8682 authorizing the City of Monroe to apply for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Funding for Water Pollution Control Center Standby Generators and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

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

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing.

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,210 authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Joint-Use Agreement with La DOTD for parking adjacent to Ouachita Grand Plaza and further providing with respect thereto. (Legal) (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods noted the City is doing a joint agreement with DOTD and she wanted to know what is the benefit of the City participating.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, stated the Ouachita Grand Plaza is a City owned building that is lease to the Housing Authority to house the elderly residents for many decades. He said when the City entered into the agreement with Ouachita Grand Plaza that the Housing Authority who operates that building but they need parking for the building. He further stated there is a big space under I-20 that wasn't being used and the City went to State to get use of the area a parking lot for the Ouachita Grand Plaza. He noted an agreement was signed in the 70's with the state and it was in place numerous years, but the agreement expired. He further noted this Ordinance is putting a new agreement in place to be used by the residents of Ouachita Grand Plaza in connection with the lease the City has with them.

Ms. Woods stated for clarification that the building is a City owned and she wanted to know if the City just give that building to someone else. She wanted to know what part of is the Monroe Housing Authority.

Mr. Creekbaum noted Ouachita Grand Plaza Inc., which is owned and operated by the Monroe Housing Authority, have the rental of the entire building for the purposes that are set forth in the lease. He said it is essential to provide shelter and housing for elderly and needy residents for the City of Monroe. He further noted they came back about eight months ago, and they wanted to amend their lease because they want to do millions of dollars of upgrades to the building. He stated the amended lease was brought before Council which was approved and in the process of doing the amended lease it was discovered that the parking agreement which was attached to the lease was expired. He said the City has been working with DOTD to get that resolved and this is the Resolution of that issue He further stated with the Council's approval tonight the City can sign the joint use agreement and Ouachita Grand Plaza can sign their amended lease.

Ms. Woods stated for clarification that the Monroe Housing Authority is still in control of the Ouachita Grand Plaza. She further stated the City didn't give it or lease it to any other companies.

Mr. Harvey wanted to know if the Ouachita Grand Plaza just need a long time lease to do their financing structures.

Mr. Creekbaum stated they already have a long term lease, but he thinks the way they were looking to finance these upgrades required some modifications to a very old lease that did not permit finances.

Seeing no one come forward the Hearing was closed.

Before moving to the next item on the agenda the Chairman wanted Mr. Creekbaum to discuss the amendment to the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, stated on the Collective Bargaining Agreement he sent out an email about one minor modification that was missed in the transposition of it. He said the training officers section where it talks about additional compensation for training officers the word jailing and training officers should have been included. He further stated for the record the City is asking that word be included.

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing and seeing no one come forward the Hearing was closed. Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,211 approving a Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of Monroe and the International Union of Police Associations, Local No. 81 AFL-CIO and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Citizen's Participation:

(1.) Mr. Matthew Sims, 608 South 5th, stated close to four years ago there was a great injustice when the Mayor's cycle came around and people approached him asking him what are his thoughts. He said being honest he is sad to report this administration to resolve any criminal activity in this City. He further stated it didn't surprise him that the Mayor never answers his phone anymore or return any calls. He noted he is still a citizen of Monroe and people approached him wanting to know what the City did to him. He said he says to them they haven't done anything yet but what they have done to other residents by looking the other way and perpetuating the injustices that has occurred is sad. He further noted he has been a citizen of Monroe all of his life and he has seen quite a few administrations. He said the late Mr. Bob Powell and Mr. Abe Pierce were gentlemen that when you called City Hall they were subjected to answer the phone and certainly if a citizen had a concern they would meet with them. He stated when calls are ignored from citizen's it's shameful and it should be corrected.

(2.) Ms. Johnnie Thomas, 414 South 8th Street, stated she has been a citizen in Monroe all her life and she has been to all the parades unless she was out of town and Saturday was first time that she has known a train to come through four times. She further stated to her that is unacceptable, and this is not New York or Los Angeles, but this is small community that want everything done decently and in order. She said she thanks God there were no safety issues, but the City needs to work on that.

Mayor Ellis stated the City was in constant contact with CPKC and the City was told a train was coming that day. He further stated there are only a few people in the country that can control what the train does but he is not one of them. He said he wish there were another schedule that day.

Ms. Thomas stated she wanted to voice her opinion.

Mayor Ellis said he agrees, and it is a great opinion.

Mr. Harvey stated as someone who has worked with the railroad most of his career it is incredibly frustrating.

(3.) Mr. Tyrone Dickens, K-9, 3004 Dick Taylor, stated he spoke with a few Councilmembers, and he met with Mayor Ellis, but he just wanted to say everything probably not going to go his way. He said he was disappointed at first, but he is not now because the City started new procedures they have to go by. He further stated he was new to the procedure, and he hasn't canceled the show, but he wants a fair shot to go by the procedure. He said if it don't work this time because it is short notice, he will have more time to straighten it out. He noted to many people are asking him why he not back out there and doing things for the kids. He further noted he is going to create something for the kids and make sure it is a safe environment. He said he asking the City if he

doesn't get it for Mother's Day he won't target them for it but wants to be able to work towards next year. He said he wants the Blue Alright tour to continue to come to Monroe and the first one was a successful they want to move to the arena.

Mr. Marshall said most definitely, and he is ready.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m., upon motion of Mr. Harvey and it was seconded by Ms. Woods.

Mrs. Gretchen Ezernack
Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Ms. Ileana Murray
Staff Secretary