

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
March 26, 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

There was absent: Mrs. Dawson

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

The Invocation was led by Chief Operating Officer Jimmie Bryant.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ms. Woods said good evening, and it's good to see everybody here today and it is good to be back. She stated there have been a lot of challenges in her family, but things are starting to look up. She said to those who have offered prayers for her family and herself, they are truly grateful. She noted Pastor Levi Cyrus, Senior Pastor of the Evening Star Baptist Church, was a very fine gentlemen and a role model. She noted he passed away last week, and his services will be tomorrow at the New Antioch Baptist Church. She said if you know anyone in his family or anyone who attends his church; this has been very hard for them to have a man snatched up in the prime of his life and going home to be with the Lord. She further noted he was definitely a God fearing man, and she stated everyone is wanting to go to heaven, but no one is wanting to really die, and we hate to see our family members die. She said if you would pray for the family it would be appreciated.

Mr. Marshall said good evening to everyone, and he congratulated all the newly elected. He thanked everyone that have supported him over the years, and he said he looks forward to the next chapter in his life. He said he looks forward to continuing to work with everyone in whatever capacity that God has him in his next season. He said he has enjoyed every moment of it, and he wouldn't change it for the world. He stated there are a few things going on across District 4 and some more Easter egg hunts going on all over, just check social media.

(Mr. Harvey arrived at the City Council meeting at 6:06 pm.)

Chief Jimmie Bryant, Operating Officer, sitting in for the Mayor, stated he is going to deviate just a little bit. He said Mayor Friday Ellis has a slide presentation and he noted he would utilize some of the Mayor's staff to explain some of the things going on in the City.

Mr. Sean Benton, Water Plant Superintendent, said the first slide is the Water Treatment Plant expansion Phase 1 and he stated the City currently have been operating the new plant for about two months producing great quality water. He said new settling plates were put into the plant which gives it a better treatment process and also increases the square footage of treatment within the system itself. He stated they are giving tours at the location right now and to request a tour call 318-329-2321 or go to the City's website.

Chief Bryant wanted Mr. Benton to tell the audience how much of the community the water system serves.

Mr. Benton stated the water system services the whole community of Monroe which is right at 21,000 connections. He said they also provide water for the Town & Country water services, and he said overall they provide water for over 75 to 80 thousand people and businesses.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, said the 318 and DeSiard street improvement project groundbreaking was held on March 18th. He said 318 Day was set aside for those who reside in the 318 area code, and it was an opportunity to highlight unique things about the 318 culture, businesses, and residence. He said with the planning of Ms. Nirali Patel, Main Street Director, this event was held at Palace Park. On another note, he said the DeSiard Street improvement project

groundbreaking will be the corner stone for the downtown area. He said Downtown Economic Development District (DEDD) is paying for this project 100% and this is phase 1.

Mrs. Stacy Rowell, Director of Administration, noted the next slide is the new Esports Game Room at Emily P. Robinson and the ribbon cutting was held last Wednesday. She said the maintenance team did all the renovations and the IT department found all the wonderful equipment. She stated it houses three 85 inch screen televisions and twelve pc units for gaming. She further stated the City hopes to grow this project into more community centers and maybe start a league in the City.

Chief Bryant said there is a grocery store on the Southside now and he encouraged everyone to go see it. He said it has fresh produce, household supplies, and just about anything you would need to enhance your convenience to not have to drive across town to larger markets to shop.

Mr. McCallister said the next slide the City is approaching a year of storm drainage cleaning. He said the City has cleaned 12 miles of pipe within the City limits. He said a lot of debris was removed from the lines and 480 catch basin have been cleaned. He said 28 truckload of debris were removed and it is a five to six year program. He noted the before and after photos shows the amount of debris being removed.

Mrs. Ezernack welcomed everyone, and she said she appreciates everyone being here. She said it's a week off for people with school children and they are out busy doing different activities throughout our community. She said with the rain on yesterday Public Works was out, all hands on deck and the City appreciates all their work. She noted the City appreciates all the drainage work being done. She said yesterday proves the City still have a way to go, cleaning out underground storm drains. She further noted the City survived yesterday and she appreciates all the hard work of everyone that was called in.

Upon a motion of Mr. Harvey and seconded by Mr. Marshall, the minutes of the Legal and Regular session of March 12, 2024, were approved. (Ms. Woods abstain. She was not present at the last City Council meeting.) (There were no public comments.)

Proposed Condemnations:

The following condemnation was removed.

(1.) 505 Moore Ave (D4) – Owners – Sunshine Properties/Sheila A. Parker; Sunshine Properties c/o Donald & Yvonne Boley. Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved, to remove this item from the agenda. (There were no public comments.)

ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF BIDS:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8686 accepting the base bid of Mechanical Systems & Service, L.L.C. in the amount of \$1,033,500.00, for the Chiller Replacement at various locations Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted to know which locations are included for the replacement Chiller.

Mrs. Stacey Rowell, Director of Administration, stated it will be Benoit, Johnson, Robinson, Marbles, Powell, and Saul Adler.

Ms. Woods wanted to know when the project is going to start, and she wanted to know if there is an order of preference the City will take care of the facilities. She said her concern is in the past the City had issues and the City is closing in on graduation. She said a lot of high schools use the Civic Center as there place of graduation and she wanted to know will the arena be ready to receive them.

Mr. Richard Moore, Property Control/Facilities Management, said the Civic Center Arena is already done and a lot of work has been done at the arena. He said there was a chiller that was rebuild and it took a while because of the delay of getting some parts in and it is fully cooling at the arena.

Mrs. Rowell said as far as the order there is one system that is completely down, and the City is having to run a rental unit at this time.

Mr. Moore said that is the one at Benoit and it will be the first one done. He said all the Chillers are basically the same age and instead of just replacing the one that's down, the City is replacing all of them at the same time because they are passed their useful life.

Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8687 accepting the base bid of James L. Davis Construction, L.L.C., in the amount of \$247,000.00, for the Stubbs Avenue Office Complex Alterations Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Department of Administration:

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to consider request from the Purchasing Division for authorization for an authorized City representative to advertise for bids for the Monroe Regional Airport Runway Intersection Rehabilitation Project. The estimated cost of construction is \$361,000.00 The source of funds is FAA Funds. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved to consider request from the Purchasing Division for authorization for an authorized City representative to advertise for bids for the Lakeside Drive Water System Improvements. The engineer's estimate is \$341,200.00. The DBE goal is 14.47% and the source of funds is the Capital Infrastructure. (There were no public comments.)

Department of Public Works:

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8688 approving Work Authorization No. 4 with Garver, L.L.C. for the modifications to the intersection of Runway 04/22 and Runway 14/32 and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8689 approving Work Authorization No. 3 with Garver, L.L.C. for modifications to the MLU Runway 4 MALSR System and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Engineering Services:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8690 approving Close-Out Change Order No. Two (2) for the Benoit Recreation Center Parking Lot Improvements Project for an increase in the contract amount of \$133,854.62 and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted to know what happen for the City to need this amount in an increase.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, stated the biggest bulk of the change order is due to excavate, remove, and haul off a mixture of asphalt and concrete. He said once they began to do the overlay of the existing asphalt, the plan was to till it back in to create a base and the equipment was heavily damaged twice. He noted over \$40,000.00 worth of damage to the contractor equipment which the City is not being charged for, however, the City had to resolve the issue before they are able to come back. (He shared photos of what was under the parking lot.)

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if at some point asphalt was placed on some existing concrete.

Mr. McCallister said yes, with concrete it's a hard base, you can just go back over it but that's not necessarily true because whenever you have compromised concrete as a base you get reflective cracking. He said the new asphalt that you just lay is going to reveal every crack within the concrete beneath it. He said you remove that and come back with a good base and that's what the City has done.

Ms. Woods said basically this is the cost for the City to get it out of there.

Mr. McCallister said that is the increase in the overall contract which was \$707,700.00 and this is an increase on top of that \$102,000.00 for the removal of that shown in the pictures that the City had to remove. He said there was a change order related to lighting and once they began work the

City had to redirect the contractor with a new site plan related to Manny's overall masterplan. He said the City wanted to make sure that those lights were incorporated within the islands appropriately for future planning. He stated ultimately this was a \$153,000.00 change order and the City came to some compromise based on some pricing the contractors gave and some of their numbers. He further stated the City split labor and equipment because they had equipment that was on site that had to stay for a while. He said change order number five and six were for the undercut demo and haul off.

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8691 accepting as substantially complete work done by Ashton Construction, LLC for the Chennault Municipal Golf Course Irrigation System Pump Station Improvements project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8692 approving the commitment of funds for the Louisiana Watershed Program CDBG – MIT grant for the West Parkview Drainage Improvements Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance amending and supplementing the City of Monroe Operating Budget for the fiscal year 2023-2024 and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted to know what the City is amending.

Mr. Dan Richard, Budget Officer, said this is the current year's budget and he said there are a few line items being amended in the general fund and several special revenue funds. He said overall in the general fund mainly increasing sales tax and he stated the City is budgeting for some Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) money that was received from Hurricane Laura. He further stated that's for building permits and the City is mainly increasing city expense, prisoner housing, street lighting, property insurance, and group insurance for retirees. He said there are several lines for amending capital mainly in public works, community affairs, and city expense.

Ms. Woods said when talking about increasing for street lighting, she wanted to know if the City already have designated areas where they will do better with street lighting.

Mr. Richard said it is based on what the City actually spent, and he said in other words he underbudgets what the City will spend on street lighting for the entire year. He said for general funds the City is looking at increasing revenues by almost 4.3 million and increasing the expenditures by just a little over 4.4 million. He noted he originally budgeted for a small surplus and with these increase its basically balancing the budget going into the end of the year for general funds. He further noted for the special revenue funds there's just a few funds, mainly capital infrastructure and other small funds that really had no original budget, but the City spent a little bit of money there. He said the City's Downtown economic development is budgeting for the property tax increment that he didn't originally budget for and the other line items. He said there is a large transfer out that goes to debt service to pay for the bonds.

Ms. Woods stated the City is introducing this item tonight, and she further stated she would like to talk to Mr. Richard a little bit more in depth on what the City is really doing.

Mr. Richard said that is correct.

Ms. Woods noted she would like to talk to Mr. Richard between now and the next City Council meeting.

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

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing seeing no one come forward the Hearing was closed.

Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mr. Harvey and approved Ordinance No. 12,212 adopting the fiscal year 2024-2025 Operating Budget and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.) (Ms. Woods nay)

Mrs. Woods said this is a question she had during the budget hearing, when the judges presented their budget, and they were asking for an increase. She said the City has talked in the past about getting them an increase and she wanted to know if the City did anything with the budget.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, stated at this point, he reached out to engage in informal dialogue with the judges to resolve the issue. He said he has been looking at it holistically to see what the City can bare, what's going on at City Court and the City will be working with them to see if there's something that can be done to accommodate and move everyone forward. He said it will probably be accomplished by a budget amendment.

Ms. Woods said she appreciated Mr. Creekbaum but the City said the same thing last year and nothing was done about it. She stated the City got back to the Budget Hearing and were faced with the same problem. She further stated that was her concern last year and it concerns her again this year.

Mr. Creekbaum stated he absolutely intends to work with the judges because this is an issue he doesn't want to see come before the Council again.

Mrs. Stacy Rowell, Director of Administration, stated they did receive two years of a 5% increase.

Ms. Woods stated she recalls that, but it is still the whole concern of it.

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing seeing no one come forward the Hearing was closed.
Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,213 adopting a five-year Capital Improvement Program for the City of Monroe from May 1, 2024, to April 30, 2029, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m., upon motion of Mr. Harvey and it was seconded by Mr. Marshall.

Mrs. Gretchen Ezernack
Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Ms. Ileana Murray
Staff Secretary

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