

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
May 28, 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, and Mrs. Dawson

There was absent: Mr. Marshall

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 Director of Purchasing Mr. Curt Kelly.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Harvey had no announcements.

Ms. Woods said good evening, and it's good to see everybody. She said she hopes everybody had a really great Memorial Day weekend. She said they always say the next best thing to a three day weekend is a four day work week. She gave her condolences to Pastor James E. Jackson, Faith Harvest Baptist Church, who lost his mother on Sunday and about a month ago he lost his brother. She said the family is really going through and she said if you see him let him know you are praying for him and his family. She stated it has been a pretty rough month for her in her district and she asked for prayers for the Ruck's family that lost their young son in a senseless shooting. She said the Reese family's 22 year old died in his sleep and his mother teaches at Shelling Elementary and the Cole family lost a 17 year old. She said it's like epidemic in the community and it's not anyone person fault but it's not a one person problem but a community problem. She said the City is losing so many of our young babies and the City has to figure out how to tackle this. She said she knows we cannot police certain types of crime because you don't know what's going on in a person's house or at a party. She said the fact is there has to be something done and she is all in. She said she doesn't know what the real answer is or if the City should put more substations in our community to respond quickly. On another note, she said if you know Ms. Voila Horne that lives on Cooper Street she will be turning 90 on the 30th of this month. She said her family gave her a surprise birthday party on Saturday and her favorite color is emerald green and it was a beautiful event. She said it's something big to be said about somebody who lives to be 90 years old especially when there are so many young babies dropping off right now at 22 and 23. She stated it's on the agenda and she hopes it passes; the month of June is Juneteenth month and its coming up again. She said the City is excited and there will be three parades one on June 14th in the Town of Richwood, the infamous parade done by Ms. Marie Brown on June 15th, and June 22nd the Black Chamber. She further stated the City will be sure to put all this on the City's calendar. Lastly, she said Chief Tellis and Sergeant Williams are doing some amazing work with seniors in our community, and they will be in her district (District 3) on Thursday at 2pm at the Powell Street Recreation. She said Home in Monroe is coming June 15th and it will be a mini-series workshop at the Civic Center from 9am until 1pm.

Assistant Chief of Police Mary Tellis stated the Monroe Police Department started SCI (Senior Citizen Initiative) and it is a component of community policing. She said this will make the third community meeting on Thursday. She said the first meeting will be at 2pm at Powell Recreation center and the second one is at 4pm at the Benoit Recreation. She said they are so excited about our seniors because they feel like their voice is not heard and they are often forgotten. She further stated they are excited to hold their first ever senior citizen police academy starting June 5th, 12th, 19th, and 26th from 9am until 12pm. She said to register for the event the telephone number is 318-348-1134 and she said there will also be different activities they will do with them throughout the year. She said they will talk about home safety, internet safety, and financial scams. She said they will also go into the Monroe Housing Units to talk

to seniors to hear their concerns. She said this is not just a one and done, this is the new unit part of the community policing effort and Sergeant Stephanie Williams is over this unit.

Sergeant Stephanie Williams, Monroe Police Department, said this is a new group that Assistant Chief Tellis thought of, and she said she is glad she is allowing her to be part of this division. She said they see new things for our seniors, and she said seniors are often forgotten and don't feel important. She said this division will help get senior citizens back into society not only physically but mentally helping them live longer. She said they will have physical activities and a lot of seniors they have talked to in different meetings want dancing. She said they want to give them what they need to be vital and upon doing that they are actually bridging the gap between police and senior citizens. She noted they are trying to get seniors out and active again because a lot of times they are forgotten about, but they are the foundation. She further noted the City creates everything for children and teenagers but nothing for the seniors. She said this is an opportunity to give back to those that actually created us.

Ms. Woods thanked Chief Tellis and Sergeant Williams for sharing with the City. She said they have already had an introductory meeting at Powell and folks out there are excited about it.

Chief Tellis said the last component to get the City involved is "Adopt A Senior" and they want the City of Monroe to embrace our seniors.

Ms. Woods had further communications and she acknowledged Council Elect Bishop Rodney McFarland and Minister Verbon Muhammad, and she thanked them for coming to the City Council Meeting.

Mrs. Dawson said good evening to everyone and thanked them for attending. She thanked Chief Tellis and Sergeant Williams for coming and she stated that was actually her next announcement. She said they had a senior meeting a couple Thursdays ago and it was phenomenal. She said they got the chance to speak to some seniors in District 5 and they were very vocal about what they want to see at their recreation centers. She said she is excited because the seniors have told them they do feel forgotten sometimes and this is a way to bridge the gap to make sure seniors have one on one communication with police officers. She said this is a way for the officers to get in front of our seniors and let them know who they are; to say they are the ones patrolling the neighborhood and the ones that's going to help when they call. She said that is something the Monroe Police have guaranteed the City will be able to get from the Monroe Police Department and she is very thankful about that.

Chief Jimmie Bryant, Chief Operating Officer, sitting in for Mayor Friday Ellis had no communications from the Mayor.

Mrs. Ezernack thanked everyone for being at the City Council Meeting and she welcomed the newly elected Council Elect who will be taking office July 1st at noon at the Jack Howard Theater.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey and seconded by Mrs. Dawson, the minutes of the Legal and Regular session of May 14, 2024, were unanimously approved. (There were no public comments.)

ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF BIDS:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8710 accepting the base bid of Don M. Barron Contractor, Inc. in the amount of \$308,511.25 for the Lakeside Drive water Distribution System Improvements Project and authorizing a city representative to enter into and execute a contract for said work. (There were no public comments.)

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Council:

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8711 recognizing the month of June as Juneteenth Celebration Month in the City of Monroe and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Kenya Roberson, 116 Glenwood Drive, stated she is very appreciative that the City is doing this which is very important to the community. She said she hope the City Council and the

Mayor try to attend some of the events that are coming up. She said it would really be helpful to see them all within the community. She said she can come back later to tell the City about some of the things the Chamber has but there are various organization that are doing things this month. She said just like the City attends Mari Gras and all those other things we need to make sure that we also attending Juneteenth.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8712 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Fleet Feet of Monroe for (The Big Run) at the Forsythe Park 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 Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8713 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to Reaper Boat Works LLC (Reaper Fest Music Festival) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Engineering Services:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and approved Resolution No. 8714 approving Change Order No. One (1) for the North 6th St. Improvements (Louisville Ave. to Stubbs Ave.) Project and further providing with respect thereto. (Ms. Woods Nay.)

Mrs. Ezernack noted there is a correction to the amount.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, stated the amount should be \$65,113.60 and that is on the second line of the whereas clause.

Ms. Woods said for the sake of those at home; she was reading through it and the City is going to have a rededication in cost and adding 7 days. She wanted to know what is going on for this item and she said she always love saving money.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, stated this is a decrease in the overall contract price and the City has removed the striping that is a part of the project. He said the City is coming back with striping for the North 6th Street project and the City has implemented a pilot project in the area for striping to include bike and pedestrian travel lanes. He said the City is finalizing the permanent striping that will go from Louisville to Forsythe and it will be done separately. He noted throughout the City they do striping in various locations and overall, he thinks the last was the Phase 5 striping. He further noted it will not be a part of Phase 6, but they will break it off separately. He reiterated it is a decrease to \$65,113.60 and adding seven construction days for them to wrap up all contract documentation.

Ms. Woods stated for clarification that the City is pulling part of the striping out now. She wanted to know if the City is going to do the pilot part of it now.

Mr. McCallister stated there is temporary striping down that will not last a year at best and the City will come back with the final striping well before the temporary striping.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the permanent striping part is being pulled out.

Mr. McCallister said what they were going to do as part of the contract is stripe it as it is now with two lanes. He said this is not an afterthought of what they did but they saw this as a perfect opportunity to do a pilot project. He said it cost the City nearly nothing to do and prove out the concept to come back with the final striping.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the City pulls it out and come back a year later will it still be around \$65,000.00?

Mr. McCallister said no it will not and it will be more because this encompasses the stripe. He said the \$65,000 would be for the existing striping from Louisville to Stubbs. He said the City will come back with a final striping not only to cover this area but going all the way out to Forsythe. He said it is a completely separate project and that is why the City has to break it out. He said a Change Order can't be significantly larger in nature than what you originally scoped out. He said the City can't change order the final striping into this project because it would go against bid law.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if this is something that has to come before the Council.

Mr. McCallister said if it exceeds \$250,000.00 the City will absolutely have to bring this before Council and go out to publicly bid. He said he doesn't foresee it being that much but obviously if it is the City has to come back before the Council to get approval.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th, wanted to know if the premature thanking the City for saving money is minute and if that is was what she was hearing for clarification.

Mr. Harvey stated for clarification it is a reduction of the overall cost of the project and it is a completely different approach the City will take for the full stretch of 6th Street.

Mr. McCallister stated that is correct.

Ms. Brown noted she hears what Mr. Harvey is saying but in the beginning the City was being thanked for saving money. She said now the City is saying they will scrap that money to put up a new project that is going to cost more money. She stated her question is why thank the Engineer department for saving money. She said it should have been just pulling the project and charging the City more money later.

Mrs. Ezernack asked Mr. McCallister to quantify why the City broke it up into two parts and are holding back. She wanted to know if it would also help with speed reduction along that corridor.

Mr. McCallister said it is and he stated there were a lot of conversations and meetings that took place that save the City money. He said there have been a number of conversations on this specific project that the City has not agreed with the contractor and have saved the City money. He said they don't present those to the Council and pat themselves on the back for saving money. He further stated to Ms. Brown's and Mr. Harvey's point within the bounds of this project the City is reducing the contract by this amount and the City is going to break out a separate project for striping from Louisville all the way to Forsythe. He noted the City can not change order that into this project because it changes the scope of the project and the reason for ultimately having two projects the City saw an opportunity to meet with the community to implement a pilot project that has proven itself to work. He said the City could have followed a traffic study and did a \$500,000.00 project to find out it didn't work. He said the City spent less than \$7,000.00 in temporary striping that would last up to a year and proved the concept that the City can apply in this area or other areas of the City. He said it was a small investment that the residents wanted to provide safe bike and pedestrian travel lanes using the footprint that the City already have, and the Garden District don't need two lanes of roadway in that section. He said he also did a second traffic study and instead of going out and building sidewalks or ten foot bike lanes in people's yards they are using the existing lane.

Mr. Harvey thanked Mr. McCallister for that, and he said it has made a difference in that section.

Mrs. Ezernack said it's like a freeway and it has been before.

Mr. McCallister stated people travel an average of eight miles per hour over the speed limit and speeding through residential areas. He said by narrowing down this striping the City did two increments of speed study and the average reduction below the speed limit is four. He further stated it is a safer environment and that's what the City is shooting for.

Ms. Woods said she appreciates what the City has done, and she said the City is saving the \$65,000.00 and she can definitely go with the savings. She said her concern now becomes when the City brings it back and she isn't in favor of the \$250,000.00 bid law. She said the \$65,000.00 could easily turn into some large number that the Council will never know about because it doesn't have to come before the Council that is her concern. She stated for the record she is voting against it because of the public bid law, and she does not know how much it's going to cost when the City brings it back. She said if it is under \$250,000.00 the Council will never know how much money was spent on it.

Mrs. Ezernack said in these instances keeping the City abreast of these projects she thinks there will be a list of projects with that kind of information in it. She said she doesn't know where the City stands with getting that off center for the Council but if someone can keep the Council informed.

Mr. Curt Kelly, Director of Purchasing, said when the City changed the purchasing policy, what the Council said in the guidelines, the City provides that update to the Council twice a year. He said it was provided in January and the City will provide it at the six month period. He said every six months the City provides the Council with an update. He said the City provided the list of the updates to all the Council and he said Ms. Woods requested it first but they provided it to all the Council in January of this year. He said there is always transparency when it comes to any project that is under \$250,000.00 and Monroe City has an internal City auditor at the Council's disposal, and it is public record. He noted it will always be out there where the Council can see and know what is being spent. He further noted no project is ever secret when it comes down to anything over \$5,000.00. He said State law requires the City to put it in contract form and they go out and solicit quotes. He noted the City is working on a system now where they can put it out as an advertisement anything up to a certain dollar amount where anyone can bid on it where the City is not only soliciting the quotes. He said they try to get a least five quotes to have competitive bids and he reiterated there is always transparency. He said to say you're not going to bid on something or vote on something because there is no transparency, there is an internal auditor that works at the Council's disposal that they can always see. He said no one is trying to hide or manipulate anything and the City has to answer to the public just like the Council. He said the City thanks God for the Council's service and the City try to make sure they do the right things also. He said the City will provide the Council with that update again and he said anybody in the public can come to their office anytime to ask for this information and they will provide it for them. He said they are hired to do their job just like the Council is elected to do theirs.

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8715 approving a Superseding Lighting Agreement between the Department of Transportation and Development and the City of Monroe for the Kansas Lane – Garrett Rd. Connector Project (H.007300) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance declaring a 2013 F-150 Crew Cab owned by the City as no longer necessary for public use, authorizing the same to be sold at private sale to the Town of Sterlington, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance declaring certain property within Forsythe Park no longer necessary for public use authorizing a lease between the City of Monroe and Northeast Louisiana Children's Museum, Inc., and further providing with respect thereto. (legal) (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods stated she has questions, but she is going to visit with the City Attorney, Mr. Brandon Creekbaum. She said she has questions because of some of the language that's in it.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and approved to introduce an Ordinance Ordering and Calling a Special Election to be held in the City of Monroe, State of Louisiana, to authorize the rededication, levy and collection of a special tax therein; making application to the Louisiana State Bond Commission and providing for other matters in connection therewith. (Admin.) (Ms. Woods Nay.)

Mr. Rodney McFarland I, 1017 Ouachita Avenue, said he has a lot of questions concerning the introduction of this Special Election for this tax. He wanted to know if this is a renewal.

Mrs. Ezernack stated it is a rededication.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know what is it a rededication of and what is the City trying to change with these funds.

Mrs. Stacey Rowell, Director of Administration, noted this is the Capital Infrastructure tax that has been on the books for about twenty-five years. She said it expires and at this point the City doesn't have the availability to be able to bond because there isn't enough time span. She said there are still projects the City can't put on the books because the City needs more funding. She

said typically when you have a tax you are bonding against the City needs at least a ten to fifteen year runway at a minimum to be able to borrow funds.

Mr. McFarland said the City is saying rededication again and he wanted to know if the City is adding other departments to receive these funds.

Mr. Creekbaum said no, and he stated the list of departments that were included in the original tax he thinks was drainage, drainage facilities, street, street facilities, fire station, apparatus, and police station. He said he thinks there was a list of five separate facilities that were in the original tax. He said water works improvements facilities, streets, bridges, drains and drainage facilities, sewers, disposal works, police stations, fire stations, police station, fire trucks and apparatus, public buildings and facilities are the exact same list that are in the existing tax.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know if this is the same tax that came under Mayor Robert Powell.

Mrs. Rowell stated it started as the street maintenance tax in 1994 under Mayor Raymond and they renewed it early and repurposed it as a Capital Infrastructure tax. She further stated it is the tax that have been on the books for a while.

Mr. McFarland stated he doesn't remember the Fire Department being apart of the tax.

Mrs. Rowell stated the City broaden the tax in 2001 to pick up some of those things.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know when this tax expires.

Mrs. Rowell said she believes it expires in the fiscal year twenty-nine or thirty.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know why the City is dithering and dabbling with it now if the City has plenty of time to deal with it.

Mrs. Rowell stated the City have projects that need to be put on the books that the City can't identify funding for. She said if the City wants to borrow against the tax the City needs a minimum of ten to fifteen years. She said it's typical, towards the sunset of one of these that the City try to get that extension to start bringing on more projects.

Mr. McFarland noted the City has thirty-three days before a new City Council take over and he is trying to see the urgency of waiting thirty-three more days. He said the new Council can study this a little bit more and it seems to him this is rushed. He said the City is moving quickly with this when they are right at the line of a new Council, and he doesn't understand the urgency of moving this fast with this election. He stated the Council needs to study this more because the public doesn't have the same information. He said he thought by now he would be receiving this information so he could be abreast of a lot of things that's going on but apparently he is not. He said he has to still come and ask across the mic and he is very much not in favor of this introduction. He said he is asking that the Council table this matter because in thirty-three days the City will have a new Council. He said they all have been preaching about working together and the only way the City will move forward is everybody working together. He said when we see things moving at this pace when the City is at the point of having a new Council; it's a red flag for him and others. He further stated he thinks the City needs to hold up on this and not move forward with this matter.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, wanted to know within the language of this tax being passed will the tax ever have to be passed again after rededicating it.

Mrs. Ezernack stated at some point in the future it would expire out again. She said if this tax pass it will have the same length of time she would think.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, stated that is not correct and it is proposed in perpetuity.

Ms. Marie Brown said that is not correct and the Council will never have to pass this tax again. She noted tax without representation is wrong.

Mrs. Ezernack stated there is going to be representation because it is going to be public election.

Ms. Brown said if the Council pass this tax and the public never gets to vote on this tax again, the Council is taking the power from the people. She said she don't understand what the Council don't understand when the Council is putting the public in a position where they have no voice.

She stated this needs to be tabled because it will give the Council coming in a chance to look at all the details. She further stated the Council doesn't know all the details and they thought this tax could be renewed again but it can't. She said if the Council and the community is not up on it that is wrong. She said she never want to vote for a tax that she doesn't have the right to not vote on after twenty-five years. She said the Council is leaving the burden on young people to make a decision and taking their decision to participate in government away. She said the City is losing a lot of things the community can be apart of and this is not right. She said give the next City Council a chance to look at all the details and at this point the Council would have been voting for something they didn't even know was in this bill. She said the tax should have been listed as a renewal for people to understand. She said the State bond commission and providing for other matters in connection there with is talk for the City can spend it anywhere. She said districts 3, 4, and 5 can't get closed in ditches because the City will take care of the Fire and Police Department first and it's not fair. She said it is time for our community to have ditches closed in and bike lanes. She said the Council has to stop doing stuff so quickly that people don't understand, and she thinks it's disrespectful that the City did not inform Mrs. Ezernack that this bill would go on forever.

Mr. Verbon Muhammad, 203 Marx Street, stated his concern with this tax is similar to everyone else. He said in 1994, mainly in South Monroe, there were streets not paved, and he remembers once Mayor Powell was elected he began to pave the streets. He said in 2001 he guess Mayor Melvin Rambin broaden it, but his concern is now the City is broadening it and getting away from what this tax was meant to do. He said there are a lot of streets in South Monroe that need fixing, and he doesn't see any work that is being taken care of maybe one or two. He said he would be interested in knowing how much of this tax really went to street repair. He said if the tax was originally for street repair and the City is talking about fire department, police, and buildings for public use but what about the streets. He further stated he goes under Plum Street under path, and it seems like he has to hit a speed bump that has been there two years. He said he would be interested in knowing how much of this money is really dedicated to fixing streets particularly in South Monroe.

Mrs. Ezernack asked Mr. McCallister to speak to some of the type of projects and how the City has used some of those funds in the past and recent past as well.

Mr. McCallister stated he would echo a portion of that in regard to projects. He said for decades the City have seen an issue with projects not moving forward. He said the City have a lot of shelf ready projects were engineers put forth a great design, but the projects aren't being seen to completion. He said he has been with the City about 2 years and whenever he came aboard the streets included a lot of below grade repairs. He said because they touch a street they are classified as a street repair and through the Atakapa efforts the City is cleaning out these hot spots. He said the City has only been at this a year and have identified eight million dollars' worth of below grade repairs that need to be made. He said there are some the City has classified as critical that need to be taken care of as soon as the City can, and others classified as priority one and two. He said if they are not taken care of in four to five years they will move into the critical category. He said the City is taking a street inventory list and doing a street rehab program essentially what is has entailed in the years past is drainage repair here and there. He said the City is identifying and prioritizing all the City of Monroe streets and the goal is to go in and do subsurface repairs. He noted roughly 25% of this tax is for the street program and he compiled some information from 2020 until 2023; it was roughly 50/50 very small in regards what was spent in districts 1, 2, and 3 verses districts 3 and 4. He said it was about 52% and 48% in the other districts. He said 2023 the City saw a significant increase in spending and money allocated to failing infrastructure. He further noted districts 1,2, and 3 over a two year period received 11.1% of everything that was spent and districts 4 and 5 over 88% was spent for failing infrastructure. He said the City have to address the surface issues and that includes what the City sees and travel on but it's the failing infrastructure that killing the City for lack of better terms. He said the City has a budget of roughly \$420,000,000.00 to spent if the City hits every project on the list and he has a list he is working on that is almost ninety projects. He noted another folder that most people don't know about of other projects that at some point need to hit the pipeline. He said 421 million dollars need to be allocated to projects the City has already identified and it's going to take those funds to do it.

Mrs. Ezernack noted it's a projection of ten to fifteen years. She said talking about bonding out in order to be able to do or finance a project the City would need a long term solution.

Mrs. Rowell noted the State is not going to loan the City money if there is no revenue source. She said for clarification the tax the City is currently collecting tax was passed in 1994 the street improvement program packaged all the streets. She said every street in the City was rebuilt and the City have a spreadsheet that they were keeping track of all of that, and streets have been added since then. She said that started in 1994 and now the City is thirty years down the road. She said as the City moved through this tax and she came a board must folks involved in it at that time recognized somewhere down the road the City has to rebuild again. She said the City do repairs but at some point the streets have to be taken down to their base and rebuild all over again. She said not to mention some of the other projects that Mr. McCallister didn't get into, but this includes the sewer plant, water distribution issue, and a plethora of other types of projects the City can go through. She said the tax was broaden in 2021 because someone had the foresight to see the City would have infrastructure issues in other areas besides just street. She said the City also was put under the sewer consent decree about the same time and a lot of those funds started pouring into having to fix sewers and the City was under a federal mandate. She said the City is not under the mandate anymore and the City shelved water projects to focus on sewer, but the street program was still rolling. She said those streets were rebuilt and the City has at thirty year life span of streets but until the City have funds dedicated to pay for borrowing the City has to have a funding source.

Ms. Brown stated the City is almost diluting from the issue of this ordinance, and this is not about having special tax this is about having a forever tax. She wanted clarification if 25% of this money is allocated towards streets.

Mr. McCallister said yes ma'am.

Ms. Brown stated for districts 3, 4, and 5 the City is going to divide 25% between 3 major districts with infrastructure that is falling in. She said the community won't see any of that money that will totally benefit the aesthetics of those districts. She said there are ditches everywhere and in thirty years not a ditch has been closed in. She said she has been here ever since these tax have been passed. She further stated now she is going to see a forever tax and the City is only giving district 3, 4, and 5 25%.

Mrs. Dawson noted the City don't need the ditches closed in.

Mr. Harvey noted Mr. McCallister said in the last round that districts 4 and 5 got 88% of the Capital infrastructure funding and districts 1,2, and 3 got the 11%.

Mr. McCallister noted that in 2023 districts 1 and 2 received 47.5 percent of total funding including streets and everything in capital infrastructure program. He said districts 3, 4, and 5 received approximately 52.5 % of total funding in 2020 to 2023. He said 2023 to the current year projected districts 1 and 2 received 11.6 % of total funding and districts 3,4, and 5 would receive 88.4 % of the total budget because of failing infrastructure. He said a lot of it is below grade where the City can't see it. He further noted in regard to streets in these areas recently Lee Avenue, South Grand, Parkview, and other streets being rehabbed. He said the City has to take care of the failing infrastructure and if the City starts adding in projects that affect all districts as a whole that's where the City gets \$421 million and its divided this way if you add in those projects. He said approximately 29.9 % is going to districts 1 and 2 and approximately 70.1 % is going to go to districts 3,4, and 5.

Ms. Brown said she understands what Mr. McCallister is saying but she needs him to understand exactly what she is seeing. She said the City is overlaying the streets and spending a lot of money but what is the quality of the work the City is doing. She said yards are flooding and the City is doing the numbers and doing a lot of change orders, but the quality of the work is not there. She said her street is falling in and instead of doing the underground first the City is doing the top surface first. She said everything that the City is building North of Monroe runs South and putting the pressure on the South. She said what the City is saying in writing on paper with numbers she is not getting it in her community. She said once the Council pass this tax the public can't say are you going make sure this money is spent right. She said she hopes this Council coming in have enough courage to rescind this once the Council pass it.

Mr. Muhammad stated he heard Mr. McCallister and right now only 25% of the 18 million dollars is being generated. He said 25% of 18 million dollars is only 4.5 million to fix streets. He said in 2021 the City probably had an infrastructure problem but in 1994 when Mayor Powell dedicated this tax to fix streets somewhere down the line the City stop fixing streets. He said he is asking the Council to reconsider this ordinance and all the money needs to be dedicated to infrastructure and streets. He said he guess they passed it in 2001 and now the pot of money is smaller, and the City is collapsing. He said the City has a major trunk line which is some serious work down in Atkinson Quarters and its flooding. He said the City will have to find some money somewhere else and to leave this money to fix the streets. He said the streets in the neighborhood are horrible and the public can't get them striped or repaired and the focus is not in the community where it need to be.

Mr. McFarland noted the public is hearing these percentages of how much is going to districts 3,4, and 5. He said the City is trying to paint this picture and some people may buy into that, but there are other pots of money. He said the public knows the City received more money in the last four years than ever before. He said to say the majority of this particular tax money went to districts 3,4, and 5 but what about the other money that came in the City such as the covid and the other infrastructure money. He said the City can fool some people but can't fool all of them. He said he came with an olive branch two weeks ago and today it seems the Council took the olive branch and broke it; to say forget you, we are going to do what we want to do before you get up here. He said thirty-three days from now there will be some new faces on the Council, a new day, and a new way. He said lets work together and he stated there are some things in the ordinance the Chairman didn't even know. He said he is pleading with the Council to pull this introduction and wait for the new Council to work this out. He said for the new Council to be able to ask more questions and read other information about this before proceeding on. He further stated the Council is going to do what they want to do anyway but he is asking again. He said they can work together no matter what picture people paint about the show is going to start. He noted it is not about a show and they want to represent their community and represent them well. He further noted they don't want a tax that is forever, and he doesn't believe the Council wants that. He said he is asking the Council again to please wait until the new Council take over and come together as one to deliberate on these matters.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the Council can hold on to this Ordinance until the new Council is seated.

Mrs. Ezernack stated there is already a motion on the floor and this is only the first reading. She said it doesn't mean at the final reading it will pass. She said that means the Council have several weeks in order to get more information and she said staff is available for those who have questions. She said she will be asking questions along with her colleagues that will be asking more questions. She said the one thing she does see in this infrastructure tax is if the City had not had that over the last twenty years the City would not have many of the projects mentioned completed. She said the City probably would not have a new water plant and other items. She said questions about covid money can be answered by the administration which has been spent wisely. She said they will open the books just like the City spoke earlier about the projects for Engineering and the extra where the City saved money and spent things under the bid law. She said the administration are the experts and it's their job to keep us informed.

Mr. Harvey voted aye, and he noted he will put almost anything out there for introduction and there are definitely things the Council needs to sort out as a group.

Ms. Woods stated she is going to vote no on this and it's not she is against it one way or the other. She said she just thinks at this point and time the new Council has thirty-three days. She said she served on the Council as this administration was coming in and the old administration was going out. She said it was kind of like they were laying ducks. She said anything that came before the Council that would be impactful like this everybody said they would hold on this until the new Council comes in. She said they were not able to do any business that was under the Mayo administration as he was leaving out; nothing was done. She said because that Council was in favor of just holding because of the small amount of time. She said they thought the task should go to the new Council coming in.

Mrs. Ezernack reiterated to please find out the information the public wants to have, and the Council will be asking additional questions as well. She said again for the final reading the

ordinance may not pass. She said the City may have to start over depending on what the Council's answers are for their questions as well.

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

The Chairman open the public hearing

Upon motion Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and approved Ordinance No. 12,219 re-dedicating revenues received from the licensing and taxing of video bingo operations and further providing with respect thereto. (Admin.) (Ms. Woods Nay.)

Mr. McFarland stated as the City tries to hurry to try to do somethings before the new Council is seated he is very much against this ordinance. He said the City Attorney text him and he spoke with him today, but he told him the best thing to do is to call. He said the information he tried to get was not given to him in time and he is kind of disappointed the City is moving quickly on some matters before the new Council. He said he don't like the statement that is being made that the City can't do business because there is a new Council. He noted there is business that the City can conduct but there are some things that will affect the districts in a massive way or the employees of the Monroe City staff then the City needs to take time and wait. He further noted he is still not happy with the fact that minimum wage is \$10.00 and the fact there are those that feel like they are not being heard. He said they won't be heard if the City continues business as usual. He stated tonight has shown him how the City believes business should be carried out. He said he is against this, and he keeps saying to the Council he has given them the olive branch and they keep breaking it up. He said he is asking the Council again to please wait on this until the new Council is seated.

Ms. Marie Brown wanted to know what the City is redirecting revenue to.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted Mrs. Rowell to explain the language added into the existing dedication.

Mrs. Rowell stated it currently can only be used for employee benefits as in insurance retirement. She said it was set up originally to help pay for pension increases and retirement increases because they were coming in at higher rates than what the City had budgeted. She said along came the video bingo and the Council was passing ordinances to put it in place. She further stated the previous administrator asked the Council if the City can set aside those fees the City collects for two purposes; employee benefits not including salary and wages and the other half for capital tax that help fund equipment. She said the City continues to look for ways to be able to put funding together to give raises to employees and this would be a pot of money the City could tap into. She said it is not enough to give a whole lot of raises and it's \$300,000.00 a year. She said some of her calculations and she doesn't know what it was, but it was less than sixty cent or something like that. She said when the City starts piecing together different places to tap into it then it can possibly help fund something down the road.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know the way it stands right now, if this doesn't pass if it is only still for the benefits. She said it would not include any kind of salary compensation as a resource if the City needed to pull from that.

Mrs. Rowell said that is correct, no salaries, no wages, or no compensation.

Ms. Brown wanted to know if that is for the administration side of funding or City workers.

Mrs. Ezernack stated it would be for everyone that is not in a union.

Mr. Creekbaum stated it is all employees.

Mrs. Rowell said no, it's for those who already have a tax covering their salary which is police and fire. She said they have sales tax that is in perpetuity that covers their salary increases.

Ms. Brown wanted to clarify if it is the fire and police department.

Mr. Creekbaum stated the police and fire department would not be included in this pool of money because they have an existing sales tax that is in perpetuity. He said the way it was originally written in 2018 it excluded police and fire from the benefit portion as well.

Ms. Brown said it seems the City is right back at the same juncture and the Council don't even know what they are voting on. She said the City is talking about a sixty cent raise.

Ms. Rowell stated she doesn't have the exact number in front of her and it doesn't give much to anybody. She said it was so minute, but it can be added to other pots of money that can give some significant relief.

Ms. Brown stated all the City needs is a side show because this is so much smoke and mirrors, it's ridiculous. She said nobody knows what's going on here and the Council is passing stuff that they are not giving the public an explanation for and that's just wrong. She further stated it looks like the Council is 3 to 1 no matter what or 4 to 4 because she doesn't know what way Ms. Woods is going to vote. She said this makes no sense and the City is redirecting money all over the City and the public don't even know where the money is going. She said they aren't bringing nothing to the community, and she said thirty-three days is too long to leave the Council in power.

Mrs. Ezernack stated she would like to correct what Ms. Brown said concerning the Council. She said the Council knows exactly what this does because they discussed it at their last meeting. She further stated she was asking them for Ms. Brown would know what it was about. She noted if the Council votes this down tonight salaries or any further compensation for people would not be a part of this and it would continue in the same vein that it is currently today.

Ms. Brown apologized, and she stated it was Mrs. Ezernack's shocked look of hearing the City's statements twice. She further stated she miss read Mrs. Ezernack and she assumed with her shocked look she was surprised with what the City was saying. She said the Council don't even know what the City is saying because even what the City is saying they aren't sure of. She said the City isn't giving the public an explanation that they can live with.

Ms. Kenya Roberson, 116 Glenwood Drive, noted she was at the Council meeting prior to this when this ordinance came up. She said she listened to the questions people had when they came up in reference to minimum wage. She said she understands Ms. Rowell stated the sixty cent was just an estimate not the specific amount, however, she thinks about the people that work hard every day. She said she thinks there are various departments that have great workers who are underpaid. She said how long will it take so there can be money that can be allocated to get them above \$10.00. She said while we are sleeping they are up in the rain, out picking up trash, and doing so many things when we are sleeping or protected in our homes. She said she looks at the Council their texting on their phones and looking down when people come to the podium like it's not a concern and it doesn't look well. She said this is the only time for the community to be heard and sometimes it's like why even bother. She further noted she stop coming to Council meetings because she was like why? She said because she serves, she must do, and she has to obedient. She said when the community come to the podium it's almost like here she come; what she want. She said at least look like you are concerned sometimes, and she thinks the City needs to table this because it affects a lot of people. She said not just the people here, the administration, and the department heads but she is looking at the little bitty people.

Citizen Participation

(1.) Mr. Rodney McFarland I, 1017 Ouachita Avenue, stated truly what has been said here tonight, about how the Council acts when someone comes to the podium as if they really don't care. He said thirty-three days will be here before you know it. He said they want to work together for the betterment of this City, and they are tired of the division. He said they are tired of one side receiving and the other side not. He said they are tired of things being covered up and then they have to scrape, pull, and snag in order to get the cover off of the problem. He said those days are going to be over and it is going to be quite different. He further stated it won't be the sideshow that they have predicted but it is going to be business and representing the people of their districts. He noted the constituents will be represented well and things will change. He said everybody will know there is hope in the air of Monroe, Louisiana. He said when they hear about the bids that may come under the new Council, when the Council have to bring something back up again; it will be remembered tonight the ways and actions of the present Council members. On another note, he said the \$250,000.00 under the bid law, maybe that needs to be looked at because it needs to be reduced back down in order for more things to come before the Council. He noted he understands government and where the power lies. He

said he served the Monroe City School System for sixteen years and three years consecutively as the president. He said when the Council comes back in two weeks he pray and hopes they all have a different attitude. He said if not just remember thirty-three days things will change.

(2.) Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, said it has been a long night and it has been a minute since she came to the Council meetings, but she was really concerned about a lifetime vote. She said the good thing is the citizens will get a chance to decide that and when the Council could have compromised, what happens if it gets voted down? She stated she knows the Council isn't worried about it because districts 3, 4, and 5 aren't voting that will change. She said that is why it is best to compromise and give community something they can live with, and her only issue is a lifetime vote. She further stated to take that out and she would get out to make sure people vote for that item. She said she wants twenty-five years, and she just doesn't want infinity and if it is taken out the community has no problem with it. On another note, she said Juneteenth is coming up and there will be a two day celebration. She said on June 14th they will have breakfast and they would like to see a mixture of the City Council coming out. She said it will be at Reverend Russell's church at 9 o'clock and the breakfast is free but they asking for donation to help pay for the food. She further noted on the 15th they will have their 19th celebration of Juneteenth and the 12th year celebration of the parade. She said twenty years she expects hopefully the City will join the community and truly be a part of Juneteenth. She said it is a celebration for our community and we need to do things to get our community back on track and show we can work together. She said she wants to work together, and she doesn't have time to come to Council meetings anymore. She said she just need fairness and she asked the Council to truly do an olive branch. She said for the City to come out to the Juneteenth celebration even put a float in the parade and they are asking everybody to participate. She said nineteen years this Juneteenth has been going on. She thanked Ms. Woods for making the month of June Juneteenth month because everybody wants to do something, and we can all work together.

(3.) Benjamin Rhodes, 2500 Tichelli, stated he is here on behalf of an organization called Highway and Hedges. He said they are an outreach organization, and they are having an event in the City of Monroe on June 14th and 15th. He said they are setting up at the Burg Jones Lane parking lot recreation center and they are asking for help from the community. He further stated it will be an outdoor event with an LED screen. He noted they are a massive organization and there are hundreds of them that will be marching through the streets of Monroe to proclaim hope to those that are in less fortunate communities and crime ridden areas. He said many of them come from those types of backgrounds and walks of life. He said they are coming to bring hope that there is something better and an effort to bring crime down in the City. He further noted they come from different areas throughout Louisiana, and he is looking to meet with the Councilwoman of that district, the Chief of Police, and the Mayor to see what kind of support they can get in an effort to come together to make this a success. He said they have seen it successful in many places, cities, and states and this will be their second time in Monroe, Louisiana. He said he can leave his contact information with anyone who wants its and he is looking to network with anybody that would like to work with the organization.

(4.) Mr. Quincy Powell, 2500 Tichelli, stated he is here with Mr. Rhodes, and he is one of the pastors of the Refuge Temple Ministries under the guidance of Pastor Channing Hudson. He said he heard Ms. Woods speak about crime and he thinks it's time for us to start looking at different ways to tackle crime. He said we need to start looking at our environments and to say we need more police officers and things of that nature; he believes if you get more police officers, put cages up, treat them like animals they will respond like animals. He said he believes it's in the education and the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God that's going to change the mindsets of the people. He further stated when you have the opportunity to preach God's word you are able to educate people on where they come from and who they are supposed to be. He said by him affiliating with Highways and Hedges their efforts is to preach the gospel and win those that are lost. He noted they are here to take crime out of the minds of people. He said police officers are here to take crime off the street but if they are able to reach them with the City's support we can remove crime out the minds and the hearts of people. He said we need to spend more effort educating people and that's how to rebuild the City in a way that is pleasing to God. He further noted that is what they are looking for and hopefully they get connected with some of the Councilmen to move forward. He said this generations there are not a lot of people looking for answers when it comes down too political

and different parties they are not educated to know what's going on. He said we can get hold of them and give back to those that are young. He said then they can sit in the same seat the Council is sitting in but without that there is on hope. He said he is pleading with the Council, and he said there are a lot of things he sees by coming to the Council meeting that needs to be tackled but we all need to work together. He said we need to not be selfish to consider our own self but consider things that God will want you to do.

Mrs. Ezernack advised Mr. Powell to touch base with Assistant Chief Mary Ann Tellis to know who to contact at the Police Department to talk about their program.

Mr. Powell stated they have already gone through that channel, and they wanted to address the Council to let them know what they are doing to get the support they need. He said they are going to do their job but if we work together and the Council see what they are doing they can eradicate the situation.

Mrs. Ezernack stated the gentlemen that spoke before him mention making contact with police and the Mayor and she wasn't sure if they had already made contact.

Ms. Kenya Roberson, 116 Glenwood, stated she wrote several notes tonight, and she heard Mr. McCallister say the City did have projects that are characterized such as 1, 2, and 3. She said if it is possible, going forward if the community would know or if this could be published on the website. She said the City is great at pumping up their events and if the City give the public some media in reference to where to go to in terms of prioritizing where our streets are and what is coming up then some of the public's questions possibly could be answered. She said for the public to see progress but if the public doesn't see any and it's not transparent for the community but it's transparent to the Council; she is asking going forward with the new Council Elects as well as those who will still be on the Council, to perhaps take that suggestion. She noted in reference to the \$250,000.00 for the bids she heard Mr. Kelly say it is transparent, however, there are people in the community who are just as concerned as to what's going on with the City with projects. She said she is asking if there is a publication, newsletter, email, or something that goes out to the community such as newsletter go into the communities water bills that is something can be publicized in the water bill. On another note, she stated the Northeast Black Chamber are gearing up for the Youth Entrepreneur Academy on June 1st for the 2024-2025 school year and she said this has been a quiet keep secret. She further stated this past school year they had sixty high school students from various parishes and schools. She said they taught them on Saturdays from 11:00 am until 2:00 pm it was completely free. She said they picked them up, fed them, they had speakers to come in, talked about careers, entrepreneurship, and what they need to do. Lastly she stated three minutes sometimes is just not enough to know the important things and she said the City talks about crime, our youth, and the City have to do some things. She said when you have organizations that are putting sweat, blood, and tears night after night, day after day you have to want to listen.

The being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m., upon motion of Mr. Harvey and it was seconded by Mrs. Dawson.

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.