

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana  
August 22, 2023  
6:00 p.m.

The Honorable Chairman Gretchen 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 Pastor Ortadius White Brass, The Well Church.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Harvey had no announcements.

Ms. Woods thanked everyone for coming to the council meeting and she said it is good to see everybody. She thanked the National Guard for the medical wellness program, and she thanked all of the staff at the Monroe Civic Center for all their hard work.

Mr. Marshall thanked everyone for coming out to the council meeting and he announced the Mu Tau Chapter of Omega Psi Phi 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Prostate Fun Walk/Run will be on Saturday September 16, 2023, at the Monroe Downtown Rivermarket. He said team packages are \$200 and individual packages are \$25, and he said in order to be part of the program contact Mr. Herbert D. Guillory or one of the Omegas.

Mrs. Dawson said school has begun and the children need to be reminded to hydrate themselves as well as the adults. She said to make sure your children are drinking plenty of water, exercising, and getting a lot of sleep. She said in just the last week people have been falling out and that the ambulance were called to pick up some children from dehydration. On another note, she said she is super excited that the parking lot and the playground equipment at Benoit Recreation Center has arrived, and she thanked everyone for the grant writing and the funds that have come through to make it possible.

Mayor Friday Ellis noted the military conducted a Medical Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program for them to be more mission ready. He further noted the team saw a total of 1,240 patients, they did 4,244 procedures, and 576 eyeglasses were fabricated and distributed. He said the estimated fair market value of services provided was \$862,729.21 that included pharmacy. He said the level of professionalism and the feedback from the community was unbelievable. He thanked the community, the volunteers for providing extra services, Mr. DJ Fortenberry, Community Relations Liaison, and all the staff at the Monroe Civic Center for their hard work. He noted the inclusive playground at Benoit is one of many steps including sidewalks and ADA accessibility that the City is taking to improve the lives of every single one of our citizens. He thanked Ms. Ellen Hill, Director of Planning and Urban Development, and her team for finding the funding for this project. Mayor Ellis said Mr. Davon Barbour, President/CEO of New Orleans Downtown Development District, was very interested in coming to the City of Monroe and creating a sister city to talk about ways that our development districts can work together. He said he brings a ton of expertise with him, and he has worked a bit of everywhere around the country. Mayor Ellis presented the keys to the City to Governor John Bell Edwards at the State of the State banquet. He noted it was the City's honor to be able to host Governor Edwards and let him know the City appreciates him during some very difficult times in his term. On another note, the Mayor presented Mrs. Angie Sturdivant, City Attorney, with a letter on behalf of the Monroe City Employees, City Council, and citizens expressing sincere congratulations and accommodations as Mrs. Sturdivant embarks on her new appointment as the City Court Division B Judge for the City of Monroe. He stated her recent appointment as Judge is a testament to her dedication, commitment, and exceptional legal acumen. He said she graduated from Louisiana State University with a Bachelor of Arts in 2004 and achieved Juris Doctorate from Southern University in 2009. He said the City of Monroe was blessed when she joined the Prosecutor's Division later that same year. He further stated she became the Assistant City Attorney in 2011 and was later appointed City Attorney in 2018. He noted throughout her ten years she has consistently

demonstrated exemplary leadership, unwavering professionalism, unyielding dedication to upholding the law. He further noted her efforts have significantly contributed to the betterment of our community and the advancement of justice in the City of Monroe.

Mrs. Ezernack stated personally she is happy for Mrs. Sturdivant, but she is sad for the City Council. She thanked Mrs. Sturdivant for her services, and she said the Council now have an ally at the Monroe City Court.

Mrs. Sturdivant stated she has enjoyed working with the Council very much.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Ms. Woods the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of August 8, 2023, were unanimously approved. (There were no public comments.)

**PROPOSED CONDEMNATIONS:**

**The following condemnation was considered:**

(1) 3805 Harvester Drive (D3) (Owners – Brown & Sons Realty, Kimberly Deloris Gray, Dorothy Gray Staten) Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner was given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. Tommy James, Code Enforcement Officer, stated this is an unsafe dilapidated structure, and it was presented in Environmental Court in April 2023. They are asking that the property be condemned and give the owner 30 days to bring this property into compliance or forward to public works for possible demolition.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if anyone was present to represent the property.

Ms. Woods said she continuously gets calls on this property and she is very happy to see it come before the Council. She motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to rid it of debris and obnoxious growth.

**The following condemnation was removed:**

(2)3000 Georgia Street (D4) (Owners – Toney Gibson and Joseph Ross) Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to remove this item from the agenda. (The property has been demolished.) (There were no public comments.)

(3) 412 North 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (D2) (Owners – Bessie T. Brownfield Est c/o David Brownfield) Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner was given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot.

Mr. James stated this is an open dilapidated structure, and the owner started working on the property a year ago and nothing else has been done since. They are asking that the property be condemned and give the owner 30 days to bring this property into compliance or forward to public works for possible demolition.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if Mr. Brownfield is in agreement with the condemnation and if he would be able to remove the structure.

Mr. David Brownfield, 3603 Carver Street, said he was under the impression that was what the City was going to do.

Mrs. Ezernack motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to remove the structure, bring into compliance, and remove all debris and obnoxious growth. She said she went to see the property and she agrees it needs to be demolished.

Mr. James introduced Mr. Reginald Burrell a new hire with Code Enforcement to the Council.

Mr. Burrell stated he is glad to be on board and he is looking forward to working with the City.

ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF BIDS:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8565 accepting the bid of the Womack & Sons Construction Group, LLC, in the amount of \$2,510,850.00 for the Louisiana Purchase Exhibit Phase 1 – The swamp Project, and further authorizing an authorized city representative, to enter into and execute a contract for said work.

Mrs. Ezernack stated \$2,510,850.00 is a correction to the bid amount.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, wanted to know if Womack & Sons Construction Group is a local company.

Mrs. Ezernack and Ms. Woods said the company is located in Harrisonburg, LA.

Ms. Brown said her concern is this company will make this amount of money and they are being tax exempt, and she wanted to know why.

Mr. Harvey said it was put out for bid and three companies bid on it.

Ms. Brown said she understands that part of it, but the City of Monroe will pay the company the money but will not get any tax off it.

Mrs. Stacey Rowell, Director of Administration, stated it's the City's project therefore the City would be taxing themselves and paying a higher price on the project.

Mr. Harvey stated the project owner pays the sales tax which is the City in this scenario.

Ms. Brown stated all the money is leaving Monroe.

Mr. Harvey noted the project has to go out for public bid and the City has to select the lowest bidder.

Mrs. Angie Sturdivant, City Attorney, stated this is a Public Works Project and state law requires the City to take the lowest responsive bid.

Ms. Brown said she understands the process but for the difference of \$39,000 and \$35,000 the City of Monroe would have benefited.

Mr. Harvey stated the City is required to follow state law.

Mrs. Sturdivant said she believes Grindstone Construction is from Monroe or Sterlington, LA and it was nearly a million more.

Ms. Woods wanted to verify if the bid dollar amount on the agenda isn't the correct number.

Mrs. Ezernack noted the correct number is on the bid sheet.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved to consider request from the Monroe Purchasing Division for City Council approval that all bids received on July 17, 2023, be rejected for the Monroe Regional Airport Taxiway D Construction – Phase 1 for exceeding the project funds. (There were no public comments.)

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Council:

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8566 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin City Art Foundation for a Public Reception: (Exhibition Reception of Work by Christiane Drieling) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8567 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Chennault Golf Course for a Golf Tournament Scholarship Fundraiser (Mayor's Cup) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8568 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Northeast Louisiana Children's Coalition for a Fundraiser (harvest Under the Stars) 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:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8569 accepting and approving the Systems Survey and Compliance Questionnaire for the City of Monroe for the fiscal year ending April 30, 2023. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to consider an Application by Ryan Watts dba Beef and Barrel, 1030 North 6<sup>th</sup> St., Monroe LA 71201 for a New 2023 Class A Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (Distance Report Cleared, Cert. of Occupy Cleared) (There were no public comments.)

Department of Planning and Urban Development:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to consider request from Cloud Busters Vape LLC/Joey Mafhahi for a Major Conditional Use Permit authorizing the use of this location (2404 Old Sterlington Road) to have off-premises alcohol beverage sales in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). Major Conditional Uses are those uses that require another level of approval; therefore, this request comes before the City Council for their approval in addition to that of the Planning Commission. (There were no public comments.)

Legal Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8570 stating the City of Monroe's endorsement of Copech Properties LLC and their Project #20161643-RTA to continue their participation in the benefits of the Louisiana Restoration Tax Abatement Program.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, wanted to know if the Copech Properties were located in Monroe.

Mr. Harvey said yes.

Ms. Brown wanted to know what are they doing to get a tax abatement.

Mr. Harvey stated they are the property owners.

Mrs. Sturdivant stated this is a renewal of a restoration tax application that was previously approved to be a part of the State program.

Ms. Brown wanted to clarify that the company was under a tax abatement for 10 years and now they are trying to renew.

Mrs. Sturdivant stated they are still under construction, and it is creating 18 construction jobs, which is a payroll of \$650,000 for an 8,000 square foot building.

Ms. Brown wanted to know if the tax abatement were jobs that are going to stay in the City and not just construction jobs.

Mr. Harvey stated it is for construction only.

Ms. Brown stated this is another tax abatement that affects the fire department and schools for another 10 years.

Mr. Michael Barker stated this is not a renewal but a continuation of the present tax abatement year six through ten. He said this is the final phase of a tax abatement for a \$3 million project to restore a dilapidated building.

Department of Public Works:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8571 authorizing an Equipment Lease Agreement with RDK Assets, Inc. for garbage removal equipment for the Public Works Department and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Marie Brown wanted to clarify that the City will be renting garbage trucks from RDK Assets, Inc. instead of purchasing garbage trucks for the City.

Mr. Sean Benton, Interim Public Works Director, stated it is more cost effective for the City to lease garbage trucks because an average truck costs about \$370,000.00 and it takes about a year and a half to get to the City. He said the department is down to about 4 to 5 trucks and have been subsidizing using contractors outside of the City of Monroe.

Mayor Ellis noted this is similar to the City fleet management system and getting a vehicle through the normal mode and means is a challenge right now. He further noted every municipality is facing these challenges of getting equipment because of supply chain issues. He thanked Mr. Benton for adapting to the current climate and continuing service.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know when will the garbage trucks be available.

Mr. Benton stated no more than 10 days once this item is approved.

Ms. Brown wanted to know the rental price for the trucks.

Mr. Benton stated the current rental price is \$8,500 a month.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the rental price is per truck.

Mr. Benton clarified it is per truck.

Mayor Ellis asked Mr. Benton to give a breakdown if the City bought a new truck.

Mr. Benton stated currently they are looking at a base model truck for production at about \$375,000.00. He said the great thing about this program is any mechanical issues the company will replace it with another truck. He further stated it is running the City's cost up trying to maintain these vehicles and a lease program is the best option right now. He said the idea of actually hiring a certified mechanic has also been difficult for the City of Monroe to keep the bigger vehicles on the road and a lease program is the best option for the City moving forward.

Ms. Woods wanted to know how long will the City be leasing these trucks.

Mr. Benton stated the goal is to lease the trucks for up to two years. He said the City is trying to get a grasp on the manpower and the opportunity for the City to do garbage service for itself. He said garbage has been a very expensive task for the City, and it doesn't really generate any income but the cost the City is paying does not cover the total operation cost.

Ms. Woods wanted to clarify the City will lease the trucks for the next year or two.

Mr. Benton said yes, the City could be spending \$45,000 a week to run a service here in the City of Monroe and this is very cost effective.

Ms. Woods wanted to know will it be City of Monroe employees operating these trucks.

Mr. Benton stated that is correct.

Ms. Woods wanted to know how long is the contract with the current company.

Mr. Benton said based on the contract language the City gives a 30 day notice that the City is moving from under the company. He said once the item is approved the City will give notice to the contractor that the City will move away from that contract.

Ms. Woods wanted to know how much is the current contract.

Mrs. Stacy Rowell, Director of Administration, said about \$25,000 a week for two routes but the company provide the drivers.

Ms. Woods wanted to know how many households are on the two routes.

Mr. Benton said it's about 1,000 trash cans but the \$25,000 a week covers the truck, the driver, and fuel cost.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the City has adequate staffing for the three trucks.

Mr. Benton stated the City has always had the staff but not the equipment.

Mrs. Rowell said if the City were to purchase these trucks it would cost \$375,000.00 plus any financing cost.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the City paid that much for a truck what is the service life of that truck.

Mr. Harvey said the City would turn them over in 5 years.

Mrs. Rowell said with the last year being very expensive to maintain.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if that was because of the weight of the garbage. She wanted to verify if the City paid \$450,000.00 for a truck that it would only last 5 years.

Mayor Ellis and Mr. Benton stated that is the standard.

Mr. Benton said there are a lot of moving mechanical parts in the trucks and they try to have nine spare trucks on staff.

Mayor Ellis stated if the City tries to buy these trucks it may be up to a year of wait time and the companies buy in bulk and fleet deals. He said ask anyone with a business there are challenges with the supply shortage and inflation, but Mr. Benton has presented a great opportunity to be able to do that.

Mr. Benton said it is very expensive to be in the garbage business and in reality a lot of cities are not in the garbage business anymore. He said the City of Monroe is one of very few cities in the state of Louisiana that provide that service in house.

#### Engineering:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8572 authorizing a designated city representative to execute Change Order No. One (1) for Saul Adler Recreation Center Parking Lot Improvements Project between the City of Monroe and Benchmark Construction Group of Louisiana, LLC to increase the contract time by 15 calendar days and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8573 authorizing a designated city representative to execute Change Order No. Two (2) for the Water Treatment Plant Improvements High Service Control Vault Repairs Center between the City of Monroe and Dixie Overland Construction, LLC to decrease the contract price by \$25,000.00 and increase the contract time by 37 calendar days and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mrs. Ezernack stated this is for a decrease in the contract price and extension of contract time.

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8574 authorizing a designated city representative to execute Change Order No. Ten (10) for the Water Treatment Plant Renovation and Expansion Project between the City of Monroe and Max Foote Construction Company LLC for an increase in the contract amount by \$571,619.74 and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, introduced Ms. Rachel Drain, Burns & McDonnell, to give an update on the status of the Water Treatment Plant Project.

Ms. Rachel Drain, Project Manager, gave a Powerpoint presentation to update the City on the status of the Water Treatment Plant Project. She noted the scope of the project includes construction of a third treatment train, new administration building, new chemical storage, feed facilities, renovation of existing admin and laboratory facilities.

Ms. Sonya Jacobs stated this particular project is very near and dear to the community. She said the \$50 million that the City is spending had a DBE goal of nearly 20% and they have fought for a long time to get some equity in this project. She said 20% of the \$50 million would be spent with businesses that have been historically locked out of these types of opportunities. She said as this project progressed, and the City ushered in a new administration that amount was reduced from 19.9% to around a 3% reduction. She said the City perceived that to be disenfranchisement for the community and she appreciates the PowerPoint slides but what the City didn't see in the slides was how many businesses locally have been able to benefit from the 50 plus million dollars

that the City is spending. She said the City doesn't see how much of the money is being spent and how these businesses are being included.

Mr. McCallister noted the original contract amount had a DBE goal of 16.1% and they are tracking it at 15.85%. He further noted there are 12 DBE participants under this contract, and one was excluded for falsifying documentation.

Ms. Jacobs wanted to know the excluded participant.

Mrs. Ezernack stated that wouldn't be something the City would speak about publicly.

Mr. McCallister said they continue to track the DBE participation on this project and overall dollar amount of about 8 million. He said the participation on this project has not been paid out and there is some remaining as the project progresses. He said they are anticipating the first train to be done fall 2023 and the second train spring 2024. He stated he is on the DBE committee and the City has a goal of 12% a standard that they should be proud of but right now the City is tracking over 17% DBE participation for all the City projects combined. He further stated this project individually the City is over 4% of what a goal would normally be. He said they require updates from the contractor with every pay estimate that itemizes the DBE participation.

Ms. Jacobs stated neither she nor most of the businesses in the community agree with being proud of the 12% DBE. She further stated the DBE disadvantaged business that encompasses a lot of demographics and encompasses everybody but a straight white male. She said she doesn't believe it is too much to ask that the City do a better job reaching down into the community that supports us, so they'll have that reciprocity.

Mr. Christopher Orange Sr. stated one thing he has been pushing and monitoring is to make sure that the DBE is actually afforded fairly. He said he is known for supporting projects in the City of Monroe, but he wants to make sure with the elections coming up that the City doesn't skim over things. He further stated he heard a gentleman say the City has had some good individual success, but the City cannot tackle systemic issues with individual success. He said the City must attack it from a systemic standpoint in order to bring it into compliance.

Ms. Woods thanked Ms. Jacobs, Mr. Orange, and Mr. McCallister for their comments on this project and she thanked Ms. Drain for her update. She stated she has supported this project from the beginning because this project came to the City under the previous administration. She further stated the City knows how important the Water Treatment Plant is to the success of this community. She voted aye and stated the City should keep a watchful eye on the progress and systemically speaking make sure to tap into our local community.

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8575 authorizing the City of Monroe to provide matching funds in the amount of \$637,500.00 for US Highway 165 South; US Highway 165 Business Route Connector Phase 1, Planning and Construction Project and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Marshall asked Mr. Morgan McCallister to give the City some details on this project.

Mr. McCallister stated this is the US 165 business connector going from Highway 165 over to Jackson Street. He said the City of Monroe owns property to be able to expand the roadway. He said the City's matching funds for capital outlay is \$637,000.00 and this project will be in conjunction with right of ways that have already been purchased on that corridor.

Ms. Woods stated the City is writing a big check and she wanted to know where the money is coming from.

Mayor Ellis stated these funds will come from the Capital Infrastructure Commission (CIC).

Ms. Stacey Rowell, Director of Administration, stated the City is trying to leverage the money by giving grants and using that property.

(e) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8576 authorizing the City of Monroe to provide matching funds in the amount of \$1,260,000.00 for Booker T. Washington Stormwater System Evaluation and Upgrades, Planning and Construction Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods thanked Mr. McCallister and she said she is happy to see something coming to District 3 for a change. She said this is something the residents in Booker T. have been talking about for a long time.

(f) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8577 authorizing the City of Monroe to provide matching funds in the amount of \$1,250,000.00 for I-20 South Frontage Road Drainage Improvements, Planning, Design, Rights-of-Ways, Utilities and Construction Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(g) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8578 authorizing the assignment of and authorizing a designated city representative to execute Amendment No. One (1) to the contract for engineering and related services between the City of Monroe and Volkert, Inc. related to the West Parkview Storm Drain Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(h) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and approved to Consider request from the Monroe Engineering Department for authorization for an authorized City representative to advertise for bids for the Forsythe Tennis Improvements Project. The engineer's estimate is \$5,657,396.00. The DBE goal is 4.25% and the source of funds are the Capital Infrastructure and CVB Funds. (There were no public comments.) (Ms. Woods nay)

Mrs. Ezernack stated there is not a third source of funds on this particular project at this time.

Ms. Woods wanted to know what percentage of the money is coming from Capital Infrastructure and how much is coming from the Convention Visitors Bureau (CVB).

Mr. McCallister said 1.8 million is coming from CVB and 3.85 or 3.86 is coming from Capital Infrastructure.

#### INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance extending and enlarging the boundaries of the City of Monroe, Louisiana, providing for the recordation of the entire boundary as amended: establishing the effective date thereof, and providing further with respect thereto – Applicant - Oaks Church/Steve Hall (P&Z) (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance to amend the Zoning Map for the City of Monroe, Louisiana and providing further with respect thereto – Applicant - Oaks Church/Steve Hall (P&Z) (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance approving a proposed administrative reorganization and amending the City of Monroe Charter to provide for the reorganization of the Engineering and Planning and Urban Development Departments and further providing with respect thereto. (Council)

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, wanted to know how the Planning and Urban Development Department will be put under Engineering and who will be the gatekeeper. She said it makes no sense to her because this is what this department does. She stated who is going to check Engineering if this is moved and this is the worst thing the Council can do. She further stated everything has to be checked and a lot of people don't want to follow the rules and regulations. She said she is asking the Council to vote no on this item.

Ms. Jasmine McConnell, 102 Brass Avenue, noted she is a small business owner, and she has helped multiple businesses navigate through the permitting process. She said she is for streamlining this process and she thinks that several businesses have gone through the permitting process, and it tends to be very convoluted. She said a lot of businesses especially minority owned businesses get discouraged and they stop. She said if there is a way to streamline and make it easier for business owners to have a one stop shop she is all for it.

Mr. Roy Heatherly, Monroe Chamber of Commerce, said the Chamber supports this item as well and since he has been back over the last couple of years they have heard the process is hard and has delayed businesses.

Ms. Woods wanted to understand the streamlining and she said the things that weren't working then what makes us think it will work well when they go to Engineering. She said rules are rules and with it going to Engineering will the City stop having the rules. She said she doesn't know about permitting and how long it takes but if you have to pull a permit from PUD you should have to pull it from engineering and the timeframe shouldn't change.

Mr. McCallister said he understands Ms. Woods' concern but it's not a personal problem it's a processing problem. He said he has 15 years of experience of private consulting prior to joining the City and he is very familiar with working with private developers. He said there will be hiccups, but he has been working on a plan of action and he plans on implementing a number of things and he guarantees he will work just as hard on this as he has on other areas for the City. He said there are other departments involved in the permitting process but being under Engineering is just focusing on streamlining.

Ms. Woods said she never thought of it as a personal problem, and she understands the streamlining process, but with construction there are timelines. She said she becomes concerned as the City tries to streamline safety it becomes an issue for her. She said she would hate for the City to start cutting corners and whatever the rules are should be applicable across the board. She said she doesn't want the City to get to a point where they want businesses to move fast and take the safety aspect out of things. She said she understands some of the challenges were delays and getting people what they needed but she doesn't want the City to rush a project to a point of the City not being safe.

Mr. McCallister said he is assuming there is a fear that he will allow things to move forward without proper oversight. He stated that is not his intent nor will it be the method in regard to this transfer. He further stated the City follows the Ordinance that is in place, however, he has always looked for a way to say yes that complies with the Ordinance rather than immediately saying it's too difficult, it's a no. He said he is not saying that is what has been done before however as the City Engineer for example, if someone is coming to develop a piece of property and there is no need for drainage impact statement which cost the developer at minimum \$2,500. He said the piece of paper that comes with that is three pages filling in the blank, but the calculation involved to fill in those blanks is a tremendous effort. He said he has done them for years and his package always averages about 880 pages just to prove out a set of numbers. He said when a developer puts forth a project that does not need a drainage impact statement he would waive that because there is no reason for them to pay someone \$3,000 or \$4,000 which has been predominantly minority developers.

Mrs. Sturdivant noted Mr. McCallister wouldn't cut corners for anyone and he has moved projects that have been stagnant. She said he had done an amazing job and he was prepared for questions he didn't even know would be asked. She further noted there will not be corners cut just to rush things and cause safety issues. She said across the State this type of permitting and inspection is under the Engineering divisions and if a city doesn't have an Engineering divisions process is under Public Works.

Mr. Lamont Square, 1614 South Sixth Street, said he thinks the streamlining will be a good move. He stated he has dealt with the City and the process is misled. He said he has been doing business for 27 years and has never gone in there and things go smoothly. He further stated when you ask them questions they don't know nothing, and people are there just to get a check and don't care about the owners' losses.

Ms. Woods stated she would definitely like to have an additional conversation with Mr. McCallister, but she is one who will vote to introduce most things. She voted aye.

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance amending and adjusting the City of Monroe Operating Budget for the fiscal year 2023-2024. (Admin.) (There were no public comments.)

Mrs. Stacey Rowell, Director of Administration, stated this is to track the move from one department to another.

(e) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and approved to Introduce an Ordinance amend the Zoning Map for the City of Monroe, Louisiana and providing further with respect thereto – Applicant – City of Monroe/Transit (P&Z) (Ms. Woods nay)

Mr. Eugene Payne, 125 Reed Street, wanted to clarify if this item is a re-introduction and if it is the same property that the project is to be built on.

Mrs. Ezernack said yes, that is correct.

Mr. Payne wanted to know if the property has been purchased.

Mrs. Angie Sturdivant, City Attorney, no it has not.

Mr. Payne wanted to know the purposes of building a new terminal if the system hasn't grown in the last 10 years.

Mrs. Ezernack stated to transport our citizens and serve our community.

Mr. Payne stated it is his understanding the project will increase \$5 million or multimillion-dollars and this is a system that has grown in the last 10 years in his opinion. He said he doesn't see anyway that it can grow in the future and the City is trying to buy property for a system that doesn't have any growth in it already.

Mrs. Ezernack stated the City continues to buy new buses which will accommodate better in a newly designed larger facility. She further stated it is a safety issue and to provide comfort for the City passengers.

Mayor Friday noted it will have air conditioning where residents can sit and wait for the buses rather than sitting in the elements all day long.

Mr. Payne stated 13 years of him working for transit from his experience a terminal of this magnitude is not necessary. He said he is for progress but right now the system isn't progressing and that is his problem with building a \$5 million system with no growth.

Mrs. Ezernack stated the City could be losing some of the growth because of the access and the safety issues.

(Mayor Friday Ellis leaves the meeting at 7:27pm)

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, said she was glad to hear the Mayor say that he is concerned about people sitting in the elements. She said she would like that sentiment to go to where people are waiting on the bus with no shelter. She said she would like to see bus sheds all over the City and the City has very few covered sheds.

Ms. Woods stated this item has her puzzled and concerned because the City is moving the bus terminal from its current location to a location that's in front of the health unit. She wanted to know why the City couldn't build a multistory facility at its current location. She said it is 2 blocks from where the City is talking about bringing rail and people can easily migrate to that area. She said St. Francis Medical Center is one of the largest employers in Monroe and a lot of people take transit there. She said there is a housing development for senior citizens and everybody in this housing development aren't mobile. She said the City is moving this along way from where people have accessibility to it, and she doesn't think this is a good one.

Mr. Harvey noted Mr. Marc Keenan, General Manager, sent a note out that even if the City moves that facility away bus stops will still have medical access.

Mr. Payne said the passengers safety and passengers being out of the elements is already done. He said transit is more than getting from point A to point B and the operators do a lot more than just drive. He said the City is looking at employees with experience that are no longer there therefore transit can't be efficient to the passengers without experienced employees. He noted building a new terminal on property the City doesn't own yet is not necessary. He wanted to know where would the money come from to purchase the property.

Mrs. Rowell stated this project will be funded 80% through federal grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

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

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

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods and seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved an

Ordinance No. 12,186 amending Ordinance Nos. 12,103 and 12,136 to correct the annexed boundaries of Love's Travel Stop, providing for the recordation of the entire boundary as amended, establishing the effective date thereof, and providing further with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

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

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved an Ordinance No. 12,187 authorizing an Equipment Lease Agreement with Wells Fargo Financial Leasing, Inc. for mowing equipment for Chennault Golf Course and further providing with respect thereto. (Comm. Affairs) (There were no public comments.)

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

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved an Ordinance No. 12,188 authorizing a designated city representative to execute a lease between the City of Monroe and Selman Hanger, L.L.C. and further providing with respect thereto. (Legal) (There were no public comments.)

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

(d) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved an Ordinance No. 12,189 declaring certain immovable property located on S. 14<sup>th</sup> St. and Orange St., Monroe, La, as no longer being needed for public use, and authorizing the same to be sold to Piney Grove Baptist Church pursuant to Louisiana Revised Statute 33:4712, and further providing with respect thereto. (Legal) (There were no public comments.)

Citizen's Participation:

(1) Lester Pastor, 100 South Point Drive Apt 301, stated at the last City Council meeting held on July 11, 2023 he informed the Monroe City Council and the Monroe City Attorney about the Second Circuit Court of Appeal not being carried out. He said he reminded the Council that he placed the Second Circuit Court of Appeal in each Councilmember hands including Mayor Friday Ellis on March 14, 2023. He said it is important to his family and him that the public know the Order of Court of Appeal has been ignored by the City officials. He said the Monroe City Clerk of Court office said the order was not carried out because it was burned in a fire. He noted he asked Councilwoman Kema Dawson to bring the Second Circuit Court of Appeal to the floor for the City Council to vote on carrying out the Court of Appeal. He said Councilwoman Dawson stated she would speak with him after the City Council meeting. He further noted Councilwoman Dawson stated that the City Council have nothing to do with the Court of Appeal being carried out. He said this was an insult to his family and himself because Councilwoman Dawson didn't say this on the record. He stated City Attorney Rodney Pierre handled this case before the Monroe City Court and Court of Appeal informed him that new proceedings are to take place regarding this case. He said the order states that if new proceedings doesn't take place there will be a punishment of Contempt of Court. He further stated this is Contempt of Court by City Attorney Rodney Pierre, Mayor Friday Ellis, Monroe City Council, and others. He said he is asking Mayor Ellis to state for the record that he or the Monroe City Councilmembers can't do anything about the Order of Court of Appeal and that he cannot demand the Monroe City Clerk of Court Office put the Court of Appeal back on the record.

Mr. Harvey stated for the record that the City Councilmembers cannot do anything about the Court of Appeal.

Mrs. Angie Sturdivant, City Attorney, stated the case was finally adjudicated in 2016 and dismissed.

(2) Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, apologized for missing the last City Council meeting but she stated she did hear she was a part of the conversation. She said 98% of the things she hears are true and she finds out the other 2% is not. She stated it is her right to speak on any issue she wants to speak on and video anything she sees. She asked all City of Monroe employees to unfriend her off of Facebook. She said do not use her pictures without her permission and she said she doesn't know the rules about Facebook if it is free for all. She said don't paint her as if she doesn't know what she is talking about but if she doesn't know call her 318-381-0028 and explain it to her. She stated when she sees a 6 million dollar truck and the employees on their cell phone she

wants to see some work out of a 6 million dollar contract. She further stated a lot of people can't come to the City Council meetings and it is her duty to share this information.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 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