

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
August 8, 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 Ms. Woods or her designee.

The Invocation was led by Rev. Dr. Alvin Sharp, Senior Pastor at Zion Traveler Baptist Church.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Harvey had no announcements.

Ms. Woods thanked Pastor Sharp for coming to the City Council meeting and for his inspirational prayer. She thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting and those watching via social media. She gave accolades to Mr. James DieTiege, Solid Waste Superintendent, and she stated she received a call from one of her constituents today but before she could intercept, it was taken care of. On another note, she noted the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) medical services at the Civic Center are absolutely free and the program will run through August 12th from 8am until 4pm on Monday through Friday and 8am until 11am on Saturday. She further noted you do not need an ID or any money for these services. She said they have wellness, vision, mental health, and dental. She said if you need any of these services please go out to the Civic Center. She stated the Council learned about a grant for houses with blue tarps this past week at the Louisiana Municipal Association (LMA). She said if your home has blue tarp, and you need assistance they are giving up to \$15,000 and she thinks it's through the Louisiana Housing Corporation. She noted the property has to be the homeowner property where they live and not a rental property.

Mr. Marshall said good evening to everyone, and he said the Council learned a lot at LMA this past week. He said Mr. Joshua G. Hollins, Executive Director for Louisiana Housing Corporation, is doing a great job trying to provide service to those in need as it relates to housing. He said the grant expanded across the state with several millions of dollars they are trying to get rid of before it expires. He said the Council encourages everyone to apply for those grants because you don't know if you will get it or not. He said they have a weatherization program if you're in need of just lowering your energy costs. He said they are also piloting a section eight program that uses vouchers to cover mortgages, but affordable housing is their platform. He noted to apply for these programs go to www.lhc.la.gov and there are programs available through the City of Monroe as well.

Mrs. Dawson said good evening to everyone, and she asked everyone to pray for the children going back to school next week. She said a lot of our children get in trouble, some don't want to learn, and some do want to learn. She asked for prayers to cover all of the children from all hurt, harm, and danger. She stated there are a lot of back to school drives going on right now. She thanked everyone for the back to school drives and providing for our children because some children aren't as fortunate to have parents that are able to buy their supplies.

Mayor Friday Ellis reiterated about the back the school drive and he thanked everyone for raising funds and for the community supplying families in need. He stated the City had an opportunity to give the State of Local Government Luncheon to talk about the collaboration work between all sectors of government and how we all govern regionally. He further stated it is really refreshing to hear all of the work that's being done throughout Ouachita Parish and within the City of Monroe. On another note, he called Mr. DJ Fortenberry, Community Relations Liaison, to the podium and he introduced Major Stone the Wellness Mission Commander for the IRT at the Monroe Civic Center and he said the feedback they received from the community has been positive. He said the professionalism, the care, and how quickly they received their services is above and beyond.

Major Bradley Stone, Air Force, said the IRT program has been around since the mid 90's and it is a training platform for reserve guard and active duty to be able to practice clinical and readiness skills required to deploy. He said the City of Monroe put in an application about 2 years ago in partnership with the Delta Regional Authority. He said the Office of the Secretary of Defense collects all the applications to review them to find out where there is a need. He noted they offer no cost medical care services to the community, and they don't ask for any ID, no residency requirements, no income limitations, and no insurance information. He further noted the IRT program offers dental services, but they don't do cleanings. He said they have an ophthalmologist on site to do eye exams and eyeglasses. He said the program has doctors and nurses that do wellness exams and write prescriptions. He said the program has a behavioral health team that provides counseling and self-care classes. He stated there are about 150 medical professionals here to help until August 12th. He further stated they have seen over 550 patients and have done over 1500 different procedures, and he said the cost value based on current procedural terminology (CPT) codes for billing is about \$400,000 worth of care saved to the community.

Mayor Ellis reiterated the level of care and professionalism received from the medical professionals and he thanked them for what they have done. He said he really appreciates the staff and what they are doing for the region. He said he appreciates all the hard work Mr. Fortenberry and the staff from West Monroe, LA put in to help bring the IRT program to the community.

Major Stone said the City of Monroe is a great community and everyone is welcoming.

Mayor said he is glad Major Stone experienced what we all know and love about our people. The Mayor had further comments and he asked Mr. Morgan McCallister to come to the podium to give the Council an update on the Storm Drainage project.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, addressed a couple concerns related to some recent Facebook post in regard to the Storm Drainage Project. He said there was a picture circulating of one of the Atakapa employees leaning against the work truck on his phone. He noted the employees utilize their phones for their work. He said the post involved the equipment that Atakapa is using and there was an assumption that the equipment is identical to the equipment City of Monroe owns. He said the \$500,000 van that Atakapa uses for CCTVing the City of Monroe doesn't own and it's not something the City wants to own because of maintenance and operation associated with the equipment. He said that piece of equipment is operated by a crew and one of those individuals is certified and licensed with the National Association of Sewage Service Company and Pipeline Assessment Certification Program. He said the individuals operating that equipment are DBE related from Allworld Project Management out of Memphis, TN. He stated they are a well-qualified black owned engineering firm in Memphis, TN that is meeting the City's DBE goal which is 14% for the first year and 11% for the following 5 years. On another note, he gave a PowerPoint presentation to show an update on the Storm Drainage Cleaning and CCTVing Project. He stated this is a City wide effort to clean every catch basin and pipe within the city limits of Monroe. He said they started with City Hall, and they have identified hot spots for the City of Monroe. He noted over 6,200 LF of pipe have been cleaned in various sizes, 78 catch basin cleaned and inspected, and 18 cubic yards of debris removed. He further noted more pipe than what the City had on file is what they are seeing throughout the City.

Mayor Ellis said the importance of something like this is whenever the City starts generating projects and applications they will have better understanding of how engineering will drive the City's decision on watershed. He said to understand the downflow and how they may impact the neighborhood and other businesses.

Mr. McCallister continued his PowerPoint presentation showing before and after photos of cleaned pipes.

Mayor Ellis thanked Mr. McCallister for all the work he does, and he said he is a true blessing to the City.

Mrs. Ezernack thanked Mr. McCallister for all the work he does as well, and She thanked Major Stone for the work they are doing at the Civic Center for our citizens. She said it is a great

project and she hopes everybody that knows about it tonight will spread the word and maybe someone can take advantage of it.

Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of July 25, 2023, were approved. (Mr. Harvey abstained, he was not present at the last meeting.) (Mrs. Dawson abstained, she left council meeting early.) (There were no public comments.)

PROPOSED CONDEMNATIONS:

The following condemnations were considered:

(1) 3509 Jackson Street (D5) (Owners – Margarette Sumlin, Cobey Robison) Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, 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. Dawson motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to remove all obnoxious growth and debris.

(2) 3403 Dick Taylor Street (D4) (Owner – Killkunya K Galbert) Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, 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. James stated this is an unsafe dilapidated structure, and it was presented in Environmental Court in April 2003. 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.

Mr. Marshall wanted to know if Mr. James had spoken with the property owner earlier.

Mr. James stated he hasn't spoken to anyone about this property.

Mr. Marshall motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to rid the property of all debris and obnoxious growth with further respect thereto.

The following condemnation was removed:

(1) 3802 Phippen Street (D3) (Owners – 1st Lady Properties, LLC, Lois Cooper c/o Frances Harrison) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to remove this item from the agenda. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted to know why this item was being removed from the agenda.

Ms. Ezernack wanted to know if the property owner came into compliance with code.

Mr. James said yes, the property owner is working towards it, and he started painting the property.

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Council:

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8559 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to Angus Chemical Company for the Annual Angus United Way Golf Tournament 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. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8560 Ordering and Calling a Special Election to be held in the City of Monroe,

State of Louisiana, to authorize the Renewal, Continuation, Levy and Collection of Special Taxes therein; making application to the Louisiana State Bond Commission and providing for other matters in connection therewith. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods said for the purpose of individuals listening at home; she wanted to let them know why the City is calling a special election, what are the expectations, will the City see an increase or is this just a renewal.

Mr. Wes Shafto, Boles & Shafto, LLC, stated these are 10 year taxes that have been on the books for years authorized by the voters in 2013. He said the purpose of the renewal is because of the State Bond Commission and the Secretary of State guidelines. He further noted it has to be called a continuation because 2020 was a reassessment year and that tax was subject to a fractional readjustment of 0.01. He said the 1.07 was levied from 2020 and there are no increases and what is currently being levied is what will be on the proposition.

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved to Consider an Application by Markus Bosley dba True Releaf Lounge & Patio, 609 N. 4th Street, 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.)

Legal Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8561 stating the City of Monroe's approval of the transfer of Restoration Tax Abatement Contract #20170016-RTA from Monroe Development LLC to Vantage Health Plan, Inc. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8562 stating the City of Monroe's endorsement of Vantage Health Plan, Inc. (formerly Monroe Development LLC) and their project #20170016-rta to continue their participation in the benefits of the Louisiana Restoration Tax Abatement Program. (There were no public comments.)

Department of Public Works:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Consider request from the Airport Division for approval from the Council for an authorized City representative to advertise for bids for the purchase of an ARFF Truck. The estimated cost of the truck is \$1,000,000.00. The source of funds is FAA Funds. (There were no public comments.)

Department of Community Affairs:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8563 approving and authorizing a Memorandum of Understanding by and between the City of Monroe and Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance 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. (PUD/P&Z) (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance 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.)

RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING 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 Mrs. Dawson seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8564 authorizing Friday Ellis to sign and accept the 2023 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) and further providing with respect thereto. (Police Dept.) (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Ms. Woods seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to remove item (b) to Finally adopt an Ordinance to amend the Zoning Map for the City of Monroe, Louisiana and providing further with respect thereto – Applicant – City of Monroe/Transit (P&Z) (There were no public comments.)

Mr. Harvey wanted to know why item (b) was being removed from the agenda.

Mrs. Angie Sturdivant, City Attorney, said it was a clerical error and it will need to come back for Introduction.

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

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Marshall seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved an Ordinance No. 12,185 authorizing a designated city representative to execute an Amended and Restated Lease Agreement between the City of Monroe and Ouachita Grand Plaza, Inc. and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:51 p.m., upon motion of Ms. Woods and it was seconded by Mr. Harvey.

Mrs. Gretchen Ezernack
Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Ileana Murray
Staff Secretary