

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
June 25, 2024
6:00 p.m.

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

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

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

There was absent: None

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

The Invocation was led by City Engineer Mr. Morgan McCallister.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(1.) Mr. Harvey said usually he doesn't have much to say but he recognized that this is the last night he gets to sit on the Council with Mr. Marshall and Mrs. Dawson. He extended his appreciation to both, and he said he knows they will continue to serve the community in major ways. He said they have become a key part of his life, and it is always really encouraging to serve with people who are selfless and care about their community. He said he will miss them, and he looks forward to working with the new Councilmembers. He said the only constant in life is change and he is better having a chance to experience them both in his life and this forum brought them together.

(2.) Ms. Woods said good evening and thanked everyone for coming. She said they look beautiful out there and there are a lot of people this evening. She echoed the sentiments of Mr. Harvey, and she said it has been a journey but through it all, they made it. She said it has been a bittersweet, but she has enjoyed, learned, and it has been one she will never forget. She noted she wish Mrs. Dawson and Mr. Marshall the best as they continue with a new chapter in their lives. On another note, she said Juneteenth month is coming to a close and the City had a number of activities, and she thanked all the organizations that made this a very special month. She said the final activity will be held on Saturday at the African American Museum and she said if you want to get your heart rate up, do some running, and healing the 1k and 5k Walk Runathon is on Saturday. She said registration starts at 7:30 am at Chennault Park. She extended her congratulations to Ms. Ellen Hill, Director of Planning and Urban Development, for a job well done with the Home Expo on the 15th of June. She noted she understands it was a record number of people that were in attendance and people benefited greatly. She thanked Ms. Hill and her team, and she said to keep up the good work. Lastly, she stated Monday July 1st in the Jack Howard Theatre at 12 noon will be the installation ceremony.

(3.) Mr. Marshall thanked the citizens of Monroe, especially District 4 for allowing him to serve these last four years. He said it's been a long and bumpy ride but like everyone said the Council was able to work together to get things done. He said he thinks that is what God wants the Council to do regardless of what their opinions are, and they were able to work together for the betterment of the City. He thanked the Council staff for working with him, it has been a pleasure and he said it has been a pleasure working with the Mayor as well. He thanked the Council for their encouragement, wisdom, and being able to support District 4. He said a lot of people don't see what happens behind the scenes and they can only see what goes on in everyday life. He said it takes a lot of work to get things done in the City and he was grateful for the opportunity.

(4.) Mrs. Dawson said good evening to everyone and thanked them for being in attendance. She said this is actually a very bittersweet moment for her because as much as she loves serving she has realized how much time she spent away from her family. She stated this is not the last of her because she will still be moving and shaking in the community. She said she is very thankful for the four years District 5 and the City of Monroe gave her. She thanked everyone for their support, love, and for allowing her to be her. She further stated the Administration have been wonderful and easy to work with and whatever she ask for they were willing and available for her. She noted

to the Council they have had their ups and downs but through it all they were able to move the City forward. She said she appreciated everything she has learned, and she thanked the Mayor for all the times he involved her in projects and giving her all the information he has learned at conventions. She thanked the Council staff for being awesome for taking her phone calls and sending things she needed in emergency situations. She said it has been a blessing and she said she hates to leave the position, but the community will still see her face around. Lastly, she announced on September 28, 2024, the Walk to End Alzheimer's will be at the Downtown Rivermarket. She said Alzheimer's is a disease affecting our families especially in the black community and the community needs to get more information for this disease. She said the City needs to walk and raise money for cure and she believes a cure is coming. She said to go to her social media to register for the walk and donate from her page.

Mrs. Ezernack thanked Mr. Marshall and Mrs. Dawson and she stated it has been a pleasure to work with them. She said she knows how hard they worked for their district and for the City as a whole. She said she made two new lifetime friends that she can always call on. She noted this is not goodbye, this is hello again and to see what they can do to make Monroe what it needs to be. She called the Council, the Mayor, and the Council staff to present to the outgoing Council members a plaque on behalf of the City Council and staff commending them for their dedication and service to the City.

Mayor Friday Ellis announced the City pools are open and free to the public. He said this is the first time in years that the City invested in pool furniture and shade for the residents. He stated the Louisiana Gardens and Zoo celebrated their 100th birthday and he said Councilwoman Dawson has been a champion for the zoo. He said for decades the zoo needed some love and attention and that came with hard work from volunteerism from the community, Corp sponsors, and employees. He said the attendance in March exceeded all of 2019 and that is because of champions like Mrs. Dawson, and it wouldn't be where it is today without her dedication. He said it will continue to grow with a three and half million dollar investment within the zoo. He thanked Chief Mary Tellis and he said she cares deeply about the senior community and so does Monroe Police Department. He said seniors add some much to the community and he said this will continue to grow. He further stated there is some ribbon cutting happening as the City continues to make improvements to the seniors and recreation centers. On another note, he announced Picnic In Park at Forsythe Park June 27, 2024, at 5:30 pm until 8:00 pm. He stated to take a look at the FY25 appropriations and next time the community see anyone of the Federal Delegation say thank you. He said this year the City is set to be awarded forty-three million dollars in additional funding through federal appropriations. Lastly, the Mayor presented the outgoing Council members with a proclamation for their remarkable service to the City of Monroe.

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson and seconded by Mr. Harvey, and the amended minutes of the Legal and Regular session of June 11, 2024, were unanimously approved. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. Harvey stated he was impressed how many pages there were but on page 21 he noted to change thirty-five to twenty-five on one of his statements.

Proposed Condemnations:

1. 4011 Lee Ct. (D4) – Owner – Winford C. brown IRA c/o Equity Trust Company, Custodian. 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 given 60 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 open dilapidated structure and it was presented in Environmental Court in March of this year. They are asking that the property be condemned and he said there hasn't been any contact with the property owner.

Mr. Marshall motion to condemn the property giving the owner 60 days to bring the structure into compliance with Code or demolish the Structure and move any debris there from.

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to remove items (a,b,c,d,&g) from the agenda. (There were no public comments.)

(a) Adopt a Resolution confirming the appointment of _____ to the Board of Commissioners for the Southside Economic Development District and further providing with respect thereto. (Removed)

(b) Adopt a Resolution approving the appointment of Ethan Hunt to the Monroe Planning Commission and further providing with respect thereto. (Removed)

(c) Adopt a Resolution approving the appointment of Dustin James to the Monroe Planning Commission and further providing with respect thereto. (Removed)

(d) Adopt a Resolution approving the appointment of Martin Litwin to the Monroe Planning Commission and further providing with respect thereto. (Removed)

(g) Adopt a Resolution approving the appointment of Lisa Holyfield to the Monroe Planning Commission and further providing with respect thereto. (Removed)

(e) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8723 confirming the re-appointment of Lee Denny to the Board of Commissioners for the Downtown Economic Development District and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(f) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8724 confirming the re-appointment of Simran Dhaliwal to the Board of Commissioners for the Downtown Economic Development District and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(h) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8725 confirming the appointment of Thelma J. Steveson to the Board of Commissioners for the Southside Economic Development District and further providing with respect thereto. (Ms. Woods Nay.)

Ms. Woods noted she is of the mind that on new appointments why is the City rushing. She wanted to know why the City can't wait until the new Council is seated in less than a week.

Mr. Tony Little, 1315 Forsythe Avenue, stated he found himself in an ideally strange position and it would be ideal to wait. He said he has talked to Ms. Stevenson who has been active on the Southside Economic Development District (SEDD) Board and ideally the Council should wait on this confirmation. He said out of respect for Mr. Verbon Muhammad and Bishop Rodney McFarland; however, the Mayor has an appoint by State Statute. He further stated SEDD will not have a meeting until after the new Council has seated. He said when he first came to the board with Attorney Sturdivant and Summersgill he spent countless hours straightening out decisions made by previous boards and administrations. He said the City now has the chance to fix the SEDD and the board has asked that they are allowed to vote on it. He said it's the Mayor's appointment and he said he doesn't know any other board in Ouachita Parish that the public can see every work position. He said from the time it is requisition from the City it goes immediately on the website, and they are at the stage of executing. He said they could have had three more board seats about a year ago and if it was about politics that would have happened. He said they wanted a fresh start, so they didn't do that but could've. He noted Ms. Steveson will be on the board one way or the other. He said he wanted to sit down with the Mayor to see what he wanted and the Council to see how all that could integrate. He said now they will move forward in cohesive way and try to make it work for the good of the Southside. He noted the City will not be able to do anything with the Southside if the crime problem isn't fixed first.

Mrs. Dawson wanted to know if Ms. Woods was planning to vote no on this item.

Ms. Woods stated yes, and it's not because she doesn't like Ms. Stevenson and she said she is in her district, she attends Bishop McFarland church, and she thinks she would be a valuable asset to the board. She said her only concern is why the City can't wait.

Mrs. Dawson stated if three of the five Councilmembers are voting yes then why wait if it's going to be on there anyway.

Ms. Woods said it's just her opinion and it will pass. She said it doesn't matter if she doesn't vote for it.

Mr. Little noted a lot of effort has gone into restraint with trying to start over with the board, and he said doesn't know if the Council realize from January until after the District 5 race was over SEDD did not hold a meeting to stay out of politics. He said that was after urging of Commissioner Dhaliwal who immediately got taken off the board. He noted two of the board members want to vote for Ms. Stevenson, but they are not going to be allowed because the board seats are now open. He further noted he serves at the pleasure of Ms. Woods, and he could have been gone a long time ago, but he wanted to fix this. He said this is a volunteer position that cost him money every day, but he is here because of the wishes of two dead women who gave their life to serve the community. He said he is not here to fight anyone and sometimes when you try to grow things it's easy to tear things down. He said the City will not have real economic success until the crime problem is fixed or addressed.

Ms. Brenda Joyce Williams, 502 Carlton Avenue, stated for the record she doesn't have a problem with citizen's getting three minutes during citizen's participation because the City needs structure. She said she has a problem with folks going up more than once to be heard on the same agenda topic and nobody wants to be here all night. She said it is abuse to citizen's time and patience.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, noted democracy always has to be done and she said this can be watched on television, Facebook live, and her Facebook. She said if citizens don't have time to stay here to hear from the people that is a problem. She said she comes to understand what is going on and to hear everyone's opinion. She said when the City gets to the point where they don't want to hear from people that is an issue. She said when the Council say something the citizens have to address it, and this is not a three minute session. She said the three minutes is only at the end and the City operates under a Charter. She said the citizen's only meet with the Council twice a month and the citizens don't want to be rushed because when the new Council take over citizens might be here until 10 o'clock.

Ms. Mondarian Douglas, 5513 Long Drive, said the meetings may be long because the citizens are participating and want to know everything. She said with SEDD she has been active and attended those meetings since 2020. She said a lot of things weren't about to get done do to a lack of quorum and she thinks it would be wise to wait for the new Council to make the decision they need to make to serve those seats.

(i) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8726 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the City of Monroe (Downtown Independence Day Celebration) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(j) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8727 granting an exception to the open container ordinance to the Southern Vine (Triangle Park Block Party) 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 Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8728 accepting and approving the Systems Survey and Compliance Questionnaire for the City of Monroe for the fiscal year ending April 30, 2024.

Ms. Woods wanted someone to tell the public about the survey.

Mrs. Stacy Rowell, Director of Administration, stated this is an annual requirement of the audit; the City has to fill out a questionnaire. She said it makes statements if the City has or haven't done certain things that coincide with each law that applies to the City. She said it is required by the legislative auditor.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, wanted to know if this item was concerning the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) audit.

Mr. Harvey said this is the audit of the general fund that the City does each year. He said this is not related to any audit from HUD relative to the agenda item not that he is aware of.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, stated HUD programs are tested by the audit which could be concluded as part of the annual fiscal audit. He said this is not a HUD specific audit.

(b) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to consider an Application by Himalayan Spice, LLC dba Himalayan Spice, LLC dba Himalayn Cafe, 3600 DeSiard Street, Ste C, Monroe LA 71201 for a New 2024 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.)

Mayor's Office:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8729 approving a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the General Claire L. Claire L. Chennault Foundation, Inc. and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Hollie Boudreaux, Director of the Chennault Museum and Foundation, stated hopefully with the help of the City the use of some land will bring a festival back to Monroe. She said it will include hot air ballons, food trucks, art and crafts, vendors, and live music. She said it will come the last weekend of October of this year as Chennault Fest.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8730 authorizing a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Northeast Louisiana Economic Alliance and further providing with respect thereto. (Ms. Woods Nay)

Ms. Amanda Edge, 104 Creekside West Monroe, LA, Chairman of NELEA, stated this is an effort that is on going with a multitude of people within the community. She said it is a regional effort and she said this has led economic development in the community for years. She said they have the opportunity to take the region back and move forward with industrial projects as well as sight development in the region.

Ms. Woods stated she has talked to Ms. Edge, and this is one that she thinks will definitely do well in the region. She said her only concern is this one will entail money coming from the City and the obligation from the City is \$100,000 annually. She wanted clarification if she is correct that it will be renewable on an annual basis.

Ms. Edge said yes.

Ms. Woods said she doesn't have a problem with it because she is excited about taking the community back. She said in her opinion something of this magnitude needs to wait until the new Council takes it seat.

Mrs. Dawson thanked Ms. Edge for everything NELEA has done over the years, and this will be very beneficial for the City.

Department of Community Affairs:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8731 authorizing a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Northeast Louisiana Council, Inc. to restore the Dragonfly and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Barry Stevens, President, CEO of the Northeast Louisiana Arts Council, stated they are excited about the opportunity to raise money to restore and replace the Dragonfly at Forsythe Park. He said he appreciated the City support in this effort, and he looks forward to the City contributing to the fundraising effort.

Police Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8732 authorizing a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with PKC Investments, LLC for an MPD substation and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, wanted to know where the substation would be placed.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, noted 1111 North 4th and Roselawn.

Ms. Brown said South of District 4 is a major crime area and the City isn't putting a substation there first.

Mrs. Dawson stated there are about three substations South of Monroe already. She said there is one off Burg Jones, the public safety center, and Robinson Place someone is always there.

Ms. Brown stated she hasn't seen them, and she said Robinson is inside a subdivision. She said there are not located in areas where they need to be located.

Mr. Harvey noted this is where a private citizen, business, or local, came and brought this to the City and offered to build this out in order for the City to make this happen. He wanted to know other than maintaining utilities and insurance what is the City's obligation from a cost standpoint.

Mr. Creekbaum said this was a private citizen who recently purchased a building and will build the building out, establish, and set it up for a police substation. He said the private citizen owner is paying for the cost renovation of the building to house the police department and the City only obligation is to pay the utilities bills and make sure the property is insured while the City is in it.

Ms. Brown stated she doesn't think the Council realize what the public see all through the agenda and nothing looks like it's for her, her community, or to protect her. She said this is totally Oneroe Monroe and she said this stuff sounds good on paper, but this city is divided. She said she doesn't feel inclusive in none of this, and she said nothing the public ask for in the last four years passed. She said everything is being crammed in that citizens are going to have to pay for and the Council see nothing wrong with this and that is the sad part.

Ms. Mondarian Douglas, 5513 Long Drive, said there is not a police substation in Robinson and if there is they're never there. She wanted to know if the Southside Economic Development District was included with their crime task force or committee and if SEDD had any input.

Mr. Harvey said this is outside the SEDD and he was confused on her ask.

Ms. Douglas stated SEDD just like any other organization the City of Monroe partners with them, get their input, and allow them to be involved. She wanted to know if the SEDD was involved with this item.

Mr. Harvey noted no, that would be like if he had to pass West Monroe for something and it's not inside the lines.

Ms. Douglas said the Council make decisions that affect the overall of Monroe and the decisions that are made on the Southside of Monroe or not, affect other districts. She said again were the SEDD involved.

Mr. Harvey stated no, not that he is aware.

Chief Victor Zordan, Chief of Police, stated free stuff is good stuff and he said this is growth. He said he would be willing to meet with whomever comes up new or old Council. He said if someone brings him a free building he will put somebody in it and he not turning it down. He said he will put it on the South, North, or East he doesn't care, and he said uniform presence is the first deterrent

to crime. He said there will be a unit there doesn't mean they will be there 24/7 but they will be there. He said it is across the street from The Garden of Georgia Tucker and he proud Mr. Coburn came to the City with the suggestion.

Ms. Brown stated sarcasm doesn't work with her and the public takes this seriously. She said if she had that kind of money she would be glad to buy a building and do that, but that kind of money isn't on the Southside. She said her tax dollars will be providing convince for the other side and she said it's complacency that irritates her. She said the Council shows they don't care, and she said what Chief just said is insulting to the black community. She said at some point she want the Council to see what she sees and feel what she feels.

Mayor Friday Ellis stated for the record that anybody that was involved in this conversation knows when the City was approached this is someone who owns a nursing home and there are senior citizens living in complex across the street inside the Garden District. He said anybody who live in Garden District understands that there is property theft all the time and he asked the gentlemen building this how the City can work together to make an investment in South Monroe for a substation. He said that was his very first ask and he said if there are people willing to invest in the community the best way to get more investment is to work with people making those investment. He said he guarantee a set down conversation with gentlemen that are making investment in their own community. He said these gentlemen will come together to say how can the City come together to accomplish something.

Mr. Marshall said there are investors and business owners that express futures in doing the same; they choose to remain anonymous at this time.

Mrs. Ezernack noted when it was brought to her that was her first ask as well and she asked what the investor owns in South Monroe that could be converted into a substation. She said the seed has been planted with the individual and hopefully it will grow as well.

Ms. Woods said everyone knows she is saying everything has to wait until the new Council. She said she do know the gentlemen and she received a call as well. She said prior to the redrawing of the lines that was her district and over the years they develop a relationship. She said she knows this gentlemen to be a man of his word and when she ask for things he was always there. She said when he came to her the first thing that came out her mouth was he wanted her to support something on the Northside, however, on the East side of her district she have four to five deaths a month from murders. She said she told him she doesn't know if she can get behind him on this and he told her if she finds a building or space in District 3,4, and 5 he will come with his money and do the same thing. She said she has learned not to trust folks and she do believe he is a man of his word, and he will do what he says. She said she has been looking and she has asked the other two Council persons to identify spaces in the district not in housing developments. She said in space where people know that the substations are there and having people in them for the record.

Ms. Thelma (T.j.) Steveson, 1915 Adams Street, noted a year ago she was invited to an SEDD meeting, and she questioned why there were no women on the board, and she was informed it was because of the appointments of the Council. She thanked the Mayor for his vote of confidence, and she said what she does, she does from her heart, and she doesn't have to be recognized for anything. She thanked the Mayor, Chief Mary Tellis, and Sgt. Stephe Williams and she noted tomorrow she will be graduating from the Senior Citizen Academy. She said she thinks it should be mandatory for the Council to take this class. She said it was very informative and she said while the City bickers about the crime and who is not doing what, if you see a face to those position and know these people are human being. She said they want to go home at the end of the day just like all of us and come see how crime is fought in the City. She said it is amazing what the City have to equip those who protect and serve the community. She thanked the Mayor for the dive team new equipment and she thanked crime stoppers, HEAT, Squat, dive team, and the bomb team. She said it made her a better citizen and she thinks everybody should be informed and see how people work.

Mr. Tony Little, 1315 Forsythe Avenue, stated SEDD is an economic development and planning district, and it has nothing to do with policing. He said the City of Monroe and various other agencies have to do with policing. He said it is important to know the City must follow leadership and Mayor Ellis and Chief Zordan are in charge to protect policing. He said the City definitely needs to make sure to foster unity and not second-guess every single decision that's made up. He said of course this is a citizen's meeting and he doesn't want to keep invoking which is why he doesn't constantly come. He thanked MPD for the work they do, and he said he thinks this is good project and SEDD has nothing to do with anything else on the agenda.

Mrs. Ezernack noted that as far as the Police Academy the Council had the opportunity to attend the training and it is wonderful and eye-opening. She said it makes you proud to know who those people are and what they do and learn all the intricacies of everything they cover. Mayor Friday thanked Mr. Coburn for continuing to invest in the community and finding ways to make the community better. He said that is what the City wants from every single one of our citizens.

Ms. Woods stated because she is waiting for the investor to come to District 3,4, and 5 she is voted aye.

Engineering Services:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8733 authorizing a designated city representative to execute Amendment No. Seven (7) to the Professional Services Agreement between the City of Monroe and Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company, Inc. for the Monroe Water Treatment Plant Expansion and Improvements Project 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. 8734 approving Change Order No. One (1) for the Parkview Dr. Improvements (Winnsboro Rd. to Plum St.) Project and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, wanted to know the change order.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, stated it is \$25,000.00 essentially for some field-verified quantities in relation to driveways and turn-out.

Mayor Ellis noted whenever buses turn they realize it needs a larger turning radius and that wasn't in the quantities for the job. He said a lot of these turn-outs were widened to accommodate the buses to be able to turn so they don't make big ruts on the side of the road when they go off the edge of the road.

Ms. Marie Brown wanted to know if this work has already been done.

Mayor Ellis said yes ma'am.

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

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8735 endorsing Echo Development South Grand LLC's Application for participation in the benefits of the Louisiana Restoration Tax Abatement Program for Project #20220320-RTA and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.) (Ms. Woods Nay)

Ms. Marie Brown wanted clarification if the perpetual was removed from this ordinance.

Mr. Harvey stated this not the same one and it has been fixed. He said that was actually about the minute entry change. He said that ordinance went to final adoption last meeting, and it is at twenty-five years, and it is no longer perpetual.

The Chairman closed the Public Hearing seeing no one come forward:

Ms. Brown wanted to know if the tax abatement is waiving tax on them.

Mr. Creekbaum stated the way the restoration tax abatement program works is an older building qualifies for these credits and it's being assessed. He said for example the current property tax assessment of this building is being assessed at a value of \$184,000.00 because it is a deeply distressed historic building. He said they established this program to encourage and entice investment into these distressed historic buildings. He said the application is to spend six million dollars upgrading the building to bring it back to life and commerce. He said the RTA program whether than investing all this money then having the property immediately assessed at a higher value it freeze the assessment at it's current assessment for period five years. He said the property tax won't increase for a five year period and after the five year period they can either reapply for an additional five years which is subject to the Council's discretion. He said that's a maximum of a total of ten years and if they don't reapply the property gets reassessed in five years and they start playing taxes on the high value.

Ms. Brown wanted to know if this is the brown building on South Grand.

Mr. Creekbaum stated it is his understanding it is the building adjacent to the courthouse.

Ms. Brown wanted to know the owner for the building.

Mr. Creekbaum noted it is Echo Development and he further noted he believes that it is Representative Michael Echols. He said he believes he is a member of the LLC.

Ms. Brown wanted to know if the City is putting any money into this project.

Mr. Creekbaum noted this is a State program the RTA program beyond the freeze and the assessment value the City doesn't put in any money in the restorations.

Ms. Woods said she is voting no on this item only because it is one of those items that has been out there forever. She said this was not a second reading from last week or the week before. She said she looked for it and couldn't find how long ago it came to the Council for the first reading and she wonders once again what is the urgency of putting it on the agenda now.

Mr. Creekbaum stated this isn't a first or second reading and it is actually resolution. He said the reason it comes on this section of the agenda is that the State program requires a public hearing before adopting a resolution unlike all the City other resolutions. He said this is the slot on the agenda where the Council can hold the public hearing and there never was a first reading. He said this is how the City has done all these applications and this not the only on the City had.

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

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,220 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. (Property Control) (There were no public comments.)

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing:

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,221 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.

Ms. Melissa Save, 2702 Bramble Drive, Director of the Northeast Louisiana Children's Museum, stated on behalf of thousands of children and families that come through their doors every single day she wanted to personally thank the Council and the Mayor for their continued support for this virtual asset to the community. She said because of the families that support every day and the support of people like the Council and the Mayor who stand up on the behalf of others they are able to welcome 55,000 visitors currently but potentially 100,000 visitors every year at the new location. She said speaking on behalf of the families in Northeast Louisiana it is a yay day for the community.

The Chairman closed the Public Hearing seeing no one come forward:

Mr. Marshall said it was a discussion about a possible change to the transit route to allow access to kids to get to the park. He wanted to know if the City would still look into that.

Mayor Ellis stated he believes there is a stop near and Marc Keenan, Transit General Manager, would have to reroute it and he said he is always open to transferring a route.

Mrs. Ezernack thanked Ms. Save for the job she does, and she stated the City is looking forward to a larger and better museum at Forsythe Park. She thanked them for their hard work for everyone who very diligently getting the City were they are today over many years.

Mayor Ellis wanted Ms. Save to tell the community were to go to find out future plans for the Children's museum and where to give if they would like to get involved.

Ms. Save noted on the website at lcm.org or go by the museum at 323 Walnut Street.

The Chairman Open the Hearing:

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,222 approving an application by the Wellspring Alliance to rezone certain property and amending the Zoning Map for the City of Monroe and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Carolyn Casio, Representative Wellspring, 1515 Jackson Street, noted the timeliness of the rezoning was crucial due to the deadline of June 30th and they appreciate the City putting it forth. She said she would just ask for the City's continued support.

The Chairman closed the Public Hearing seeing no one come forward:

Ms. Brown stated she is not here to speak against it because it is already a done deal, but she has a problem with the City bringing it before the community when it was announced on television, they are opening office space in the Civic Center, and other locations.

Mrs. Dawson wanted to know what item Ms. Brown was referring to.

Ms. Brown noted she is talking about the hockey.

(The Council noted Ms. Brown was speaking under the wrong item.)

The Chairman Open the Hearing:

(e) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,223 approving the Hockey Agreement between the City of Monroe and Perkin Hockey Group LLC further providing with respect thereto. (Ms. Woods Nay)

Ms. Marie Brown said once again she is not here to speak against it because it is already a done deal, people are setting up, and the news have already announced it was a done deal. She said the community would like things to be in order and this is an after effect. She said she never seen people do stuff first then come back and ask for the money, but it has happened twice on this agenda. She stated if the City is going to go by the Charter she thinks the City needs to follow.

Mr. Parker Moskul, Managing Partner of Perkin Hockey Group, LLC, said they are grateful to be welcomed into the community and how quickly the City worked with them to make sure they would be ready for the upcoming season in October. He said he knows it was a time crunch, but they are very fortunate, and they are also fortunate to be members of the community. He said is looking forward to calling Monroe home and many of the players are excited to meet everyone.

Mr. Michael Castor, 3408 Garden Avenue, stated people are always hollering about bringing something to Monroe and every time the City do the community have to bicker about it, that's crazy. He said Mr. Moskul is 100 percent paying for it and teach children how to play hockey. He said the community hollering about crime the City should get involved and do things for the kids to keep them out the street.

The Chairman closed the Public Hearing seeing no one come forward:

Ms. Woods stated she doesn't like to sound like a broken record, but she needs everyone that is listening to understand she is not against hockey. She said she is not against having something in the community and it was the way it was done. She said she did not appreciate it, and she represents a fifth of the citizens in the community and for her to find out the City is having hockey team and the City of Monroe have a responsibility in this. She noted Mr. Moskul stated he has been living in the community for a year and it was not like it hadn't been talked about but then bringing it to her as a Council person asking her to vote on something like this. She further noted she is not excited about it, but she is glad something is coming to the community for our children and families. She said she was not excited about the way this business was handled and then take it to the public having them saying this great. She said then have people like her saying she doesn't like the way it was handle and it was handled wrong in her opinion.

Mr. Harvey stated he is not disparaging Ms. Woods but the process to get the City here he appreciated the challenge of it because if a lease goes out public knowledge is released, and the City don't really tell the public what they are working on. He said by default of bringing a lease the City has to notify the public and he said he got the press just like Ms. Woods did. He stated would he want to find out that way because he know it was something in the works, no that's not the best version of it. He said he wish it was better process and he understands he has more information than the average person. He said a lot of what the City do the cart does come before horse because once you talk about it then the genie is out of the bottle and the City is no longer negotiating now it's public record.

Ms. Woods said she appreciated Mr. Harvey's comments, but the City didn't have to say exactly what was coming but to know something was coming is fair. She said the City don't have to say what it is, and no one has to know, and she stated she do understand confidentiality of a project, but the gentleman that is the Managing Partner of the Moccasins said at the last Council meeting he moved to Monroe a year ago with that being said she voted nay.

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

(f) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,224 establishing Purchasing and Bidding Procedures for the City of Monroe and further providing with respect thereto. (Mr. Marshall & Ms. Woods Nay.)

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, stated this will pass but the fact is, this is too much money to be allocated for this position. She said the power of the Council is to be the watch dogs of the money. She said if the money is not being controlled by the Council the money should have stayed at \$30,000.00. She stated she is sorry this is something the Council feel they need to do and now they are trying to put it into law, it's not right.

Ms. Kenya Roberson, 116 Glenwood Drive, wanted to know if there is a percentage in terms of the amount that it will increase each year.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, State law tracks the CPI (Consumer Price Index) for the given year, and it is a variable number that's determined from a federal level and choosing all their complicated statistics is beyond his realm of expertise.

Ms. Roberson wanted to know if it could be any number.

Mr. Creekbaum said it could be whatever the CPI is for that year.

Ms. Roberson noted she is strongly not in favor of this amount, and she is sure it will pass. She wanted to know if there will be a public place on the City of Monroe website for the community and any person who would like to see varies professional services that are allocated throughout the year.

Mr. Harvey said there are no plans for that at this time.

Ms. Roberson stated if there is no plans to allow the community or businesses to be able to see what funds have been awarded to various persons in reference to contacts how is that transparent.

Mayor Ellis noted it is public record and if the public would like to submit a public record request it's there. He said the Council members who serve in your district have an internal auditor that works for them. He further noted everything the City do, and every dollar spent is public knowledge which can be done through a public request. He said the internal auditor works for the Council not him or the City that can be engaged at any time.

Ms. Roberson said she understands that terminology but there are some people who don't. She said that is why she asked why can't it be on the website so the public don't have to over work. She said if it is public record why do it have to be requested and not just be online for people who want to see the various tax dollars that are being distributed to various professional services. She noted she is not saying the Mayor will do anything different, but she is saying it does put a red flag up because it's not, the public have to ask for it. She said if it was made readily available to all persons then it is quite transparent. She noted she received the list the Council said to request, and it said general stuff, it wasn't specific. She said it would take away a lot of stress and podium questions if it was transparent and it wouldn't have to be asked or questioned.

Mr. Harvey noted if Ms. Roberson finds a municipality that has a system that puts it all online. He said he would talk to them to figure out how to mirror it. He said he knows part of the new budgeting software has some version of that, but the City don't have it yet. He said part of that is to bring transaction level detail.

Mayor Ellis stated the City has been on the record multiple times. He said Mrs. Rowell and himself had conversations about moving to form a government called open check book. He said it is not something the City can just throw on the website.

Ms. Roberson stated she would want for the City to not have to mimic what someone else is doing. She said from the Council's perspective she is a constituent, and she is saying that is something the City should possibly look at.

Ms. Sonya Jacobs, 700 University Avenue, said the disparity here is when she went to the podium she did so purposely because there was gentlemen before her that was not staff but was allowed to go to the podium without question. She said she don't appreciate the disparity but in the interest of diplomacy, then she acquiesced but it won't happen again. She addressed Mr. Harvey question about a municipality that has a system and she wanted clarification of his commitment and what the City of Monroe would do.

Mr. Harvey reiterated he wanted to see something similar, and he noted what the Mayor was talking about is part of the new budget were in a new format as part of making a version of just what she was describing very transparent because all these are public dollars.

Ms. Jacobs noted she works in Baton Rouge and throughout the country and she said the City of Baton Rouge have what is called a Louisiana Checkbook or an Open Checkbook. She said she would be happy to send that to the Council. She said the public can drill down by dollar amount, service, category, or company.

Mr. Marshall noted the City had some discussion on this the past couple of years and the 250 was a big jump. He said along with that and the transparency the City needs to be more engaged in the community about what this all entails. He further noted new business owners coming into the industry don't know how to be in project. He said he would like to encourage the staff and Administration in the future to look at more ideas and a larger version as far as connecting with various entities and organizations to share this information. He said there is a lot of talent that want to be included and know how to get contracts. He said there are a lot of things the City is not clear about and need to be more intentional. He said maybe doing something on a quarterly basis instead

of once a year to get the information. He said he still have that reservation and there are more things the City need to do, he voted nay.

Ms. Woods stated she is voting nay as well, and she said she thinks it's too big of jump to go from \$30,000.00 to \$250,000.00 and then next year it will be an additional increase based on the Consumer or business index. She said she know the City is saying they are patterning after the State of Louisiana. She said she was not in favor of the 250 and she is definitely not in favor of the increases. She stated she doesn't know how those scales go and how it is going to increase but her understanding is by the end of four years that the City will probably be around \$300,000.00 that the City will be able to go out into bidding procedures.

Citizen's Participation:

(1.) Sgt. Stephanie Williams, Monroe Police Department, She said the MPD created a new program called SCI, and it's the Senior Citizen's Initiative. She noted purpose of this program is to get our Senior Citizen's out of their residence and into the community. She said that they deal with Council on Aging, Monroe Housing, and the Recreation Centers for all Seniors throughout the Monroe area. She said they focus on the Seniors mentally, physically, and emotionally by getting them out into the community. She said that this program isn't just about them gathering at the recreations centers in a room and mingling with other people, it's about teaching them different things in order for them to be safe in their own community. She said the Senior Citizen's Police Academy which provides tools to help them throughout life. The mission is to bridge the gap between the Police, Community, and Senior Citizens. Many have discussed crime and crime is everywhere, they don't have enough police officers to be everywhere. They are trying to have the citizens in the community work together to help with reporting the crimes anonymously with Crime Stoppers.

(2.) Mr. Curtis Garth, 2300 Georgia Street, he is inquiring on how to be placed on the agenda as far as what the public needs to know. He said that the last time he was there, he was informed to reach out to Mr. Creekbaum, and he hasn't been able to speak with him. He said that a crime was committed against the citizens of Monroe, and he wants the matter to be handled properly. He said the police failed to work on the crime and he had to go to civil court, and he said that is not how it works. He said that is why he is there because he is trying to find out how it works when law enforcement isn't properly working these crimes.

Mrs. Ezernack noted she doesn't know if the Council can help him in this particular endeavor to resolve his issue. She said that is more of a legal issue and the Council is also not in charge of the Monroe Police, Fire, or any of the administration people at all.

Mr. Creekbaum noted he had spoken to Mr. Garth and his issue is a legal issue that is several decades old. He said that criminal matters are not to be handled with the City, or with the police. He said that Mr. Garth had been explained to by multiple people in the city that if he wants something else done there are other avenues he would have to take to address it.

(3.) Ms. Bernadine Adams, 4106 Lionel Street, said that she is very disappointed, the agenda does not reflect anything that is going on in her neighborhood. She said that history will show that she has had bullets found in her house twice. Her home insurance company that she has had for over thirty years canceled her policy, behind claims that were filed that she had nothing to do with it. She said that her street use to be beautiful, but now the grass is overgrown high by the railroad. She has reached out to several entities, but still no luck. She reached out to Union Pacific Railroad Company and was told that something could be done, he would just have to reach out to her local Union Pacific Railroad Company. She said that crime isn't the issue, because Chief Zordon has placed police in her area. She said the issue is a beautification problem, high grass, inoperable cars, and dilapidated houses, those things create issues. She said to pay the people to do their jobs, with responsibility comes accountability. She needs something to be done on White Street.

(4.) Ms. Brenda Joyce Williams, 502 Carlton Avenue, said that she would rather see a sermon than to hear one any day. Galatians 6:7. She said that this scripture is not talking about revenge, an eye for an eye. She said that those who profess to love God cannot have the attitude that I'm going to treat you badly because of what you have done to me. She said that God is not the author of that type of mentality. She said that God is mocked every time one takes the attitude of just wait when

I'm in control I'm going to get you, if you're not going to listen to me so I'm not going to listen to you. She said that one has to show meekness, love, modesty, benevolence, unity, and truth. She said that one has to represent God's grace. She said the Bible says, love you enemies and bless them that curse you, do good to haters and pray for those who spitefully persecute you. Romans 16:17-18.

(5.) Ms. Thelma (T.J.) Stevenson, 1915 Adams Street, wanted to remind them about graduation day from the Monroe Police Academy. She said that with that program it gives them information as to what they do, and how they work. She encourages others to join the program because it is so informative, and it gives us a view of what and how things are in our community.

(6.) Mr. Tyrone Dickens (K-9), 3004 Dick Taylor Street, said that he doesn't know what the protocol in order for him to speak with the Council. He said that everyone knows that when he has an event that he will have police and security. He said that he takes a lot of his funding from his events and go in different areas in the community to be a blessing. He wanted to know why it is so hard for him to get an event at Chennault Park.

Mr. Creekbaum said that after the last meeting, he spoke with Councilwoman Woods and reached out to Officer Kwasic Heckard who is over the permitting process that's with the police department. He said he spoke with Officer Heckard about the guidelines and process when obtaining the permit at Chennault park and he's giving him time to get back with him with that information. He said once he gets the overlay process of what it consists of, he will be reaching out to Mr. K-9 with that information to see how it would graft on to what he's planning. He said for future event planners, looking at things like this they look at them from a holistic approach, event by event permit process. He said when you identify different areas, how can you operate safely, making sure we have emergency access if something happens. He said that is something has happened before at Chennault Park, certain events. He said they have to look like a city, developing protocols that are generally applicable protocols across the board where we determine things on case-by-case basis. He said that they are currently working on some things with Officer Heckard, and he said that he will personally reach out to Mr. K9 and discuss it.

Mr. K9 said that when he does his events, he makes sure that things are done and handled decently and in order. He said that his events are only for adults, he doesn't allow children to be in attendance due to their lack of obedience to the rules. He said that he just wants to be able to give the adults something to do where they won't have to worry about anyone shooting up the event.

Mr. Creekbaum said that he will be reaching out to Mr. K9 this week.

(7.) Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, said that she wants to feel like this isn't a black or white thing in Monroe. She said that people are supporting alcohol all out in the open, but we are trying to ensure that Chennault is safe for emergency vehicles to be able to enter into. She said that there is an African American Museum out there so these precautions should have already been figured out by now. She feels as though there is not inclusiveness in the plans and policies in the City that is concern with what the African American race are concerned with. She said that she feels as though the OneRoe doesn't include anyone that looks like her and she feels that they are not comprehending where they are coming from. She said that there are three districts in the city and everything that is fun and resourceful is going to the Northside. She said that everything that comes South of Monroe is nothing appealing. She feels like she lives in a racist town, because we lack unity, and we are completely divided. She said there is no point quoting scripture if you're not going to live by them.

(8.) Mr. Ceazar Johnson, Marshal's Office, announced the first annual fishing tournament on Cheney Lake on June 29th at 8:00am, they want family to come out and enjoy themselves so that they can teach kids how to fish.

(9.) Ms. Mondrian Douglas, 5513 Long Drive, gave a final farewell to Councilman Marshall and Councilwoman Dawson. She wanted to be involved so much that she decided to run for office in her own district. She had many concerns and she addressed them on her platform, and she said that Councilwoman was very present, and she appreciated that. She is looking forward to these next

four years to making sure that the City follow the charter. She said there were a lot of contracts that were sprung on us out of nowhere. She said that we have to come to a compromise in order for this to work. She said SEDD has a Safe Reduction of Crime Committee that she is a part of, and they study ways on how they can help reduce crime and improve those things. She said that they are active when it comes to reducing crime if they want to mitigate it. She thanked Councilman Marshall for taking time with her explaining things when she had volunteered. She said that he helped her get a lot of things done and she really appreciates him for that.

The being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m., upon motion of Mr. Marshall and it was seconded by Mr. Harvey.

Mrs. Gretchen Ezernack
Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Ms. Ileana Murray
Staff Secretary

Mrs. Rachel Washington
Council Coordinator

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.