

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana  
September 12, 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 Mrs. Dawson.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Harvey had no announcements.

Ms. Woods said good evening and thanked everyone for coming to the City Council Meeting. She said everyone could have been a lot of different places, but they chose to spend this time with the Council. She yielded her time to Mr. Edward (Chip) Taylor with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to talk about their upcoming meeting.

Mr. Taylor stated a lot of times when people are involved in different things, life happens and he has found when life happens to people, the first thing that comes out of their mouth is oh Jesus, where is the NAACP. He further stated when we see something happen we call on God first and then we call on those that can help us. He noted the NAACP is the oldest, most revered, and most feared civil rights organization on the planet. He said on September 28<sup>th</sup> in Marksville, LA at the Paragon Casino the NAACP will be having their 81<sup>st</sup> Annual State Conference. He said Reverend Alvin Sharp, Senior Pastor at Zion Traveler Baptist Church, will be bringing the message and there will be workshops on getting out to vote. He further noted registration is \$55 and he said if you want to make a difference in your community, you must be a part of your community.

Mr. Marshall thanked everyone for coming to the City Council meeting. He announced the I Am A Survivor Women's Health and Wellness Expo is on September 30<sup>th</sup> at the Legends Plaza Food Truck Park, 601 Texas Avenue, and there will be mammograms, vaccines, vision screening, cardio, mental health, financial literacy, and family support services starting at 9am. He further announced the Northeast Delta Human Services Recovery Day celebration is on Friday September 15<sup>th</sup> at Forsythe Park from 10am until 2pm for those who are recovering from whatever they have battled with. He said he would like to celebrate Wossman High School on their homecoming week and support them with their activities. He noted the Black Wealth Expo is on September 21<sup>st</sup> at the Monroe Civic Center at 5pm and the 5K Prostate Run with Omega Psi Phi will be Saturday at the Rivermarket Downtown starting at 5pm until 9pm. He further noted the Groundbreaking Celebration at the Renewal Center for the multipurpose dining hall facility will be on September 21<sup>st</sup> at 2pm, 722 Adam Street. On another note, Mr. Marshall said mental health is something that is near and dear to him. He said he just lost a friend yesterday and men are prideful and try to get through things on their own. He said they feel if they share certain things it makes them less than a man. He said he encourages everyone to talk to someone or get some counseling if you are going through something. He said most of those things you can't fight by yourself and not to feel less of a man talking to someone, and saying you're struggling will only make you stronger.

Mrs. Dawson said good evening to everyone, and she thanked everyone for attending the City Council meeting. She said Arts with Passion will be bringing a Broadway production to the Monroe Civic Center called "Memphis", a great show you do not want to miss. She said she is inviting everyone to purchase tickets at [Artswithpassion.com](http://Artswithpassion.com) and support that particular event to keep the arts going in the City. She noted on October 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:15am there will be an Alzheimer's Walk at the Louisiana Gardens Purchase and Zoo, and she said Alzheimer's is a disease that effects our community, and the walk will give enlightenment on what Alzheimer is about. She said a lot of people are dying from this disease and we need to know how to handle it. She further noted registration starts at 8:15am and you can look up her team on the Alzheimer's webpage at [act.alz.org](http://act.alz.org). She said you can join her team and her team page is Kema Dawson Monroe City Council District 5 and they are raising money for this disease. She said you can join her team or just give a donation.

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

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of August 22, 2023, were unanimously approved. (There were no public comments.)

**PROPOSED CONDEMNATIONS:**

The following condemnations were considered:

(1) 3814 Gayton (D3) (Owners - Charlon Yvette Brown Perkins, Jeremy C Perkins) 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 60 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot.

Mr. Tommy James, Code Enforcement Officer, stated he spoke with the property owner, and they haven't done any work to the property in a while. They are asking that the property be condemned and give the owner 60 days to bring this property into compliance or forward to public works for possible demolition.

Ms. Woods wanted to know did the property owner ask for additional time.

Mr. James said yes, they did the windows, but they haven't done any work to the property. He said he told the property owner he would ask for 60 days to bring the property into compliance.

Ms. Woods wanted to clarify if there is progress on the property will the City give the property owner additional time.

Mr. James said that is correct.

Ms. Woods motion to condemn the property giving the owner 60 days to bring the property up to code and rid the property of obnoxious growth and debris.

(2) 507 Morrison (D4) (Owners – Herman & Bonnie Williams) 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.

Mr. James stated this is an open dilapidated structure and there has been no contact with the property owner. 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 motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to bring the property up to code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot.

**ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION OF BIDS:**

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8579 accepting the base bid of Rosenbauer, Minnesota LLC in the amount of \$906,993.00 for the Aircraft Rescue & Fire Fighting Vehicle (ARFF) Truck, and further authorizing an authorized city representative, to enter into and execute a contract for said work. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted to clarify the bid amount.

Mrs. Ezernack stated \$906,993.00.

**RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:**

**Department of Administration:**

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8580 authorizing the purchase of annual renewal licenses for Microsoft Office 365 from Louisiana Procurement Contract #4400025990 and further providing with respect thereto. (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 Pelican Roofing of Ouachita/Matt Roberts for a Major Conditional Use Permit

authorizing the use of this location (605 North 2nd Street) to have on-premises alcohol beverage sales and a bar in the B-2 (Neighborhood Business District). The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-2 (Neighborhood Business 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.)

Mayor's Office:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8581 confirming the appointment of Brandon Creekbaum as Monroe City Attorney and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8582 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Miss Monroe Scholarship Pageant Organization Inc., and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Department of Community Affairs:

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods seconded Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8583 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into a Cooperative Agreement Endeavor Agreement between the City of Monroe and Free Me Association d/b/a Monroe City Academy League (MCAL) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Fire Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8584 authorizing a designated Monroe City Representative to purchase a Fire Pumper Truck off of the Louisiana Multiple Award Schedule Contract. (There were no public comments.)

Engineering Services:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8585 authorizing a designated city representative to execute Change Order No. One (1) for the City Street Striping Phase 5 Project, between the City of Monroe and Highway Graphics, LLC to adjust quantities to reflect as-built conditions 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. 8586 authorizing a designated city representative, to execute Change Order No. Six (6) for the Kansas Lane Ext (Old Sterlington-US 165) Phase 1, between the City of Monroe and the Department of Transportation and Development, and D&J Construction Company, LLC to add items for the removal of a gas pipeline that was to be removed by others and removable temporary pavement striping and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8587 authorizing a designated city representative to execute Change Order No. Seven (7) for the Kansas Lane Ext (Old Sterlington-US 165) Phase 1, between the City of Monroe and the Department of Transportation and Development, and D&J Construction Company, LLC to adjust contract quantities for excavation and embankment and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted to know what happen for an \$850,000 increase.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, said this is due to excavation and embankment necessity in certain stations throughout this project. He said he invited Mr. James Ellingburg, Lazenby & Associates Inc., to further explain and he said the City is roughly 140 days ahead of schedule on Phase 1 of this project, but they have run into some issues in the subbase material. He noted vegetative debris and organic debris needs to be taken out for the base material to make sure the roadway stays intact. He further noted that in regard to the price, a major portion of the funding for this project is from Capital Outlay and the remainder is funded through the Road Transfer Program.

Mr. James (Jim) Ellingburg, Resident Engineer, said they have found concrete debris that was buried, tires, and culverts. He said this is along the new alignment that they didn't know was there

before the purchase of the alignment. He said he thinks they would have spent just about this much money if they knew it was there.

Mr. Marshall wanted to know if this was along the corridor.

Mr. Ellingburg said this is from Highway 165 to the tree line that was removed by Womack & Son.

Mr. Harvey wanted to know if Mr. Ellingburg thinks they have all the roadway fill at this stage.

Mr. Ellingburg said yes.

Ms. Woods said when doing these types of projects, you never know what is going to be underground.

Mr. Ellingburg said that is correct and maybe some time in the future they can do some other investigation but with this project they are only able to bore about every thousand feet. He said none of those borings showed any kind of debris within their path and they weren't able to put that amount in the plan. He said the price the Council was given is an extension of the bid price.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if there is a possibility that they may run into this problem again.

Mr. Ellingburg stated they do not foresee having this issue anywhere else because the remaining work to be done is along existing routes. He further stated if the Council would like to ride through the site they can get in touch with him or Mr. McCallister.

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Marshall seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8588 authorizing a designated city representative, to execute Change Order No. One (1) for the Water Treatment Plant Improvements Monroe Potable Water Storage Tank Modifications, between the City of Monroe and Dixie Overland Construction, LLC to increase the contract price by \$20,489.00 and increase contract time by 64 calendar days and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(e) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8589 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into an Agreement for Professional Services on behalf of DEDD with ECS Southeast, LLP for Geotechnical and Subsurface Boring for the Monroe Marina and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the study of the Marina is to see the feasibility of putting it in.

Mr. McCallister said this is for the geotechnical investigation within the river max that is below the surface and that will be the anchor system of the dock. He said this is a proposal to do seven borings within that max to see what type of material their dealing with below the surface. He stated Downtown Economic Development District (DEDD) have bonded out for the funds for this project and they are paying for the Marina 100%. He further stated DEDD have already voted on this project, however, it has to come before the Council before they can sign off on it.

Ms. Woods wanted to clarify that the City is not outing any money and DEDD is paying for this project and its entirety.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, said this project is being paid for through the TIF funds that have already been allocated to DEDD.

(f) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Consider request from the Engineering Department for authorization for an authorized city representative to advertise for bids for the North 6<sup>th</sup> Street Improvements (Louisville Ave to Stubbs Ave) Project. The engineer's estimate is \$928,009.92. The DBE goal is 8.93% and the source of funds are the Capital Infrastructure Street Funds. (There were no public comments.)

#### INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawon seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance revoking a 60' wide by 1,195' long portion of Adams Street from North 14<sup>th</sup> Street to North 18<sup>th</sup> Street and further providing with respect thereto - Applicant – James Machine Works – (PUD/P&Z) (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mr. Marshall 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 – Sanjib Datta – (PUD/P&Z)

Mrs. Ezernack asked Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, to explain to the Council what their options are on this item.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum stated that zoning map amendments come to the City Council after the City of Monroe Planning Commission have reviewed and issued a recommendation on what they think the City Council should do. He said in this case this comes with recommendation from the plaintiff commission that the application be denied. He said the Council have independent authority to review and assess the application on its own by existing law. He further stated the Council's options are to approve the recommendations of the Planning Commission with conditions or deny it. He said the Council have two options, the ordinance can be introduced as is, approving or denying it until the Council comes back for final adoption, or to not consider the application further. He said then the ordinance that has been motioned and seconded would have to be amended to deny the introduction to the ordinance and accept the recommendation of the Planning Commission. He said the ordinance is written with the Council approving the application and rejecting the Planning Commission recommendation.

Mrs. Ezernack asked the developer to inform the Council about the project.

Mr. Sam Datta, 1051 MLK Junior Drive, said this is a 260 room hotel that use to be the Holly dome and he said the company is a private equity firm. He said they take these properties in the City and work with the zoning office to convert them into workforce housing. He said the property is to help working people with an income between \$25,000 to \$60,000 to have some affordability in the marketplace. He said they are converting the property into 185 apartments with amenities such as pet parks, children's park, two outdoor swimming pools, gym, movie hall, and a restaurant. He said they will do background checks on all tenants to make sure they have jobs.

Mr. Marshall wanted to know if there will be upgrades to the exterior.

Mr. Datta said yes, there will be a lot of changes to the exterior and they will be joining rooms and adding kitchens. He said the average room is between 500 square feet to almost a thousand square feet.

Mrs. Dawson wanted to know the reason the Planning Commission denied the rezoning.

Mr. Creekbaum stated the overarching concern seemed to be the increase in foot traffic along Highway 165 and the safety for the people crossing the roadways in that area. He said some of the other concerns were the lack of other R-4 high density residential zoning in the immediate area.

Ms. Woods stated since her meeting with the developer she has met with a number of her constituents, and she serves at the pleasure of the people that elected her. She further stated one of the major concerns was whether or not this property at a later time would turn into a Wisner Inn and the other part is the price.

Mr. Datta stated MyHome is a brand, when you have a brand you have standards, and they have no intention of selling these things. He further stated these properties are big and when the franchisees come in they want to see how they run it. He said they are keeping the studio rooms between \$700 to \$800 and the one bedroom \$900 to \$1300 which includes all utilities. He said they are helping tenants in many ways that may want to make this property home to make sure their credit isn't impacted. He said looking into utilities and amenities that are included this should be a very good attractive property and they generally target people who work, and this is not for big families.

Ms. Woods wanted to know the dimensions for the rooms.

Mr. Datta said at a minimum the rooms are about 400 to 500 square feet and the lowest one is 1,486 square feet. He said the hotel is open and they have a garden style in the middle and there are other amenities outside the home as well. He said the highest room is probably a thousand square feet which can be converted to one or two bedroom.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the rooms will be repurposed to have walls or one big open space.

Mr. Datta said they have designed it to separate the bedrooms, the kitchen, and the living room

area. He said they have different designs and people can see it is separated.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if the kitchen will have a refrigerator and a stove.

Mr. Datta said full refrigerator and stove, but they generally see what people like. He said a two burner stove all electric which is also safer and a conventional oven that can air fry.

Ms. Woods wanted to know the cost to refurbish the property.

Mr. Datta said they are investing almost \$10 million with all the amenities.

Mr. Marshall wanted to know if they surveyed the market for the rental price point for that area.

Mr. Datta said absolutely, they will get to that, but they compared this to Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee, where they have properties and they started at this price point, and the tenants are paying more now. He said he is not expecting that here, because of the way they are investing, and they are trying to solve an issue in the middle class for people who are making \$20,000 to \$60,000. He said if they take a property like this and convert it they can bring the cost down and charge less.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know how many projects Mr. Datta has been involved in, how many he still owns, what is the general holding time for these projects, and if this project will be an exception for the holding time.

Mr. Datta stated they have been in construction for many years, and he has been doing this since 1999. He said they use to buy C apartments making it B and hold it 2,3, and 5 years. He said in the last four years they change their mindset because they saw an opportunity in the marketplace with independently ran hotels abandonment. He said there are 100,000 hotels in this country and 30,000 are independent and most of them are not doing well. He said they launched their MyHome franchise brand, and they want to have around 20 of these properties in many cities. He noted the helping the hotel owners or other property owners to come use their brand to form a standard perspective that is the reason they want to hold on to the property a minimum of 10 years.

Mr. Verbon Muhammad, 203 Marx Street, stated he thinks it is very important the Council looks at this project carefully. He said the Holly Dome was once the jewel of the City and it has deteriorated over the years. He said people would have conventions, host conferences, and people would stay at the Holly Dome. He said he thinks that area at Interstate 20 and Highway 165 would serve a better purpose for a nice hotel, and he noted if it is turned into housing people have to get insurance. He further stated if Mr. Datta is looking to put \$10 million into something, it should be a hotel.

Mr. Christopher Orange Sr., 3901 Old Sterlington Road, wanted to know if there will be any provisions for the disabled or any tax advantages.

Mr. Datta said to address Mr. Muhammad's comment they did the research; this hotel has 260 rooms and wouldn't sustain in the City of Monroe. He said that disabled people and veterans are welcome at all the properties, and they make sure that the properties are all accessible.

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson 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 – Cody Bauman/Biomedical Medical & Innovation Park – (PUD/P&Z) (There were no public comments)

(d) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 37, Zoning, of the Code of the City of Monroe, Article III, Use Districts, Section 37-37 Commercial Use District, Table 3.3 Commercial Districts Permitted and Conditional Uses and providing with respect thereto. (PUD/P&Z) (There were no public comments)

Ms. Woods wanted to have a conversation on what this Ordinance is pertaining to.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum stated this Ordinance also came from the Planning Commission were a developer wants to locate a mini warehouse facility in an existing E-3 zone. He said as part of the City's 2013 overhaul of zoning Ordinance the ability to place mini warehouse storage facility in a E-3 zone is no longer permitted use. He further stated the developer originally brought an application requesting the Planning Commission consider it be allowed conditional use in a zoning area which didn't fare well in front of the Planning Commission. He noted the Planning

Commission expressed significant concerns with the proliferation of many warehouse storage facilities and the lack of standards citywide. He said you might have one that blends in with the surrounding architecture and held to a high standard or a shabby facility that complies with code but isn't aesthetically pleasing. He further noted the Planning Commission expressed two concerns which were instead of a minor condition that only requires the Planning Commission approval to allow a B-3, a high populated business district, to do a major conditional use which would require separate Council approval. He said the Planning Commission expressed they would like to see some standards imposed on these facilities. He said following the Planning Commission meeting they brought it back as conditional use in a B-3 zone and the Legal Department looked at ordinances from surrounding communities and he took what he thought was consistent best practices. He noted they looked at the developed supplementary standards that were applied to many warehouses city wide, so that when a developer comes to submit an application for a permit to build a warehouse they are subject to review by the Planning Commission and the City Council. He said to make sure if the mini warehouse facilities continue to build they're going to be standard high quality and fit in with the community to not cause any adverse consequences to neighboring property owners.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if this passed with the Planning Commission.

Mr. Creekbaum said yes, these changes passed unanimously.

(e) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance accepting the donation from Vincent David Ditta to the City of Monroe of a 1.680 acre tract of immovable property needed for the Ruffin Drive-Water Distribution System Improvements Project and further providing with respect thereto. (Legal) (There were no public comments.)

X: 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 an Ordinance No. 12,190 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)

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

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved an Ordinance No. 12,191 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.)

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing:

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson and approved an Ordinance No. 12,192 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. (Ms. Woods nay)

Mr. Verbon Muhammad, 203 Marx Street, stated to propose the administrative reorganization he is okay with, but the Council is amending the City Charter. He said those that crafted the City Charter in the early seventies came up with a Charter for the City but now the Council is asking to amend the Charter without the citizen's approval. He further stated he thinks the City Attorney should look at this proposal before the Council acts on it because to take action without the input of the Monroe citizens is against the Charter.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted Mr. Creekbaum to address Mr. Muhammad concerns.

Mr. Creekbaum stated there are certain provisions to the City Charter that govern amendments to the Charter but there are specific provisions in the charter that allow certain changes to be accomplished by ordinance in the normal process. He said one of those things the City recently had before the Council was a change in the Mayor's and the Council's salary and another one from section 4 -11 which is the administrative reorganization provision which says the Council, within 60 days following its receipts of the reorganization proposal from the Mayor, shall either approve by ordinance or disapprove, but not amend except the written consent of the Mayor to proposed reorganization plan.

Mr. Muhammad stated for the record if the City Council is going to amend the Charter they must bring it before the citizens of the City of Monroe.

Mr. Christopher Orange Sr., 3901 Old Sterlington, stated he doesn't have a problem with the reorganization for streamlining and he said he wanted to be on the record to say streamlining is fine, as long as people aren't being pushed to the side as far as DBEs are involved. He said he hopes the public have open communication with the new City Attorney and he said he addressed his concerns with the previous City Attorney.

Ms. Woods stated streamlining concerns her more than anything else and she said unfortunately when you start streamlining processes she thinks sometimes this could potentially get the City in trouble. She further stated one of the example Mr. McCallister gave at the last meeting was the drainage impact.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, said he referenced drainage impact statements last Council meeting, and every developer submits a site development permit packet and there are different items that must be addressed, and one thing is a drainage impact statement. He stated a drainage impact statement is backed up by various degrees depending on the engineer, what methodology is used for final data, and the calculations that back up the information on the drainage impact statement. He said the City of Monroe drainage impact statement is three to four pages and the developer provides general information such as where the project is located and what are the existing conditions. He said most engineers use the rationale method to compare the existing value with the proposed run off value. He said the City tries to maintain zero impact which for example, if you have a vacant lot with grass and you put a parking lot or roof area, you are increasing the runoff, it will hit the drainage quicker than it had before. He said the City Engineer has the liberty to say whether the drainage has to be retained or detained. He said a full blown drainage impact study costs \$2,500 to \$3,500 and even more depending on which engineer. He said for some developers if there was a previous development in that area there is no reason for full blown report. He said using his experience he is able to not put that burden on the developers and he has done it on numerous occasions. He said there are other instances when the developer ask if they cannot do retention or detention but have them do a drainage impact statement which is required. He noted he is not saying he knows everything, but he is an experienced engineer, therefore, he understands when someone can move forward without a drainage impact statement. He further noted at the last meeting streamlining was a hot topic and what everyone was concerned about, but he said there is a large development that is coming to the City of Monroe that is a critical project to the area that will bring in 300 jobs, great salary, and a wonderful addition to the City of Monroe. He noted for this upcoming project everyone throughout the other divisions have heard from him in regard to this project, to stay on top of this project, and get everything that is needed. He said he was one of the last to approve this project because he has held this company to the exact same standards as he holds everyone else too. He said the goal is a two week turn around and he didn't give his final approval until about four weeks, and he communicated back and forth with the company in regard to their drainage, their platting, the easements they are seeking, and even their driveway. He said if the reorganization moves forward he wants things to move fast and things be streamlined, however, this is one example where he is holding a company that everyone may be concerned about losing to the same standards as everyone else and he will do that across the board.

Ms. Woods stated that shows a lot of integrity on Mr. McCallister's part, which she appreciates but the question comes to mind what happens when the next engineer comes. She further stated the City is changing the Charter base on Mr. McCallister's experience.

Mr. McCallister stated he can't answer for any future engineers, but he would hope he or she would be qualified. He further stated it is not about opinions and experience and there are a set of ordinances that are in place and a team that is around, and he doesn't make every single decision alone.

Mr. Creekbaum stated this is not much of a position or a person related move but about the process as a whole. He said the process at various stages is fragmented and the application comes into one department, they're reviewing some things, and then it's kicked over to another department which is causing delays in the timeline. He said there has been some frustration reported from the developers because there is information that gets lost in the cross departmental reviews. He said part of the Mayor's letter sent for proposed reorganization is to make this process more efficient and the process is cabined within one area and there's not cross departmental tension with things going back and forth.

Ms. Woods stated she totally understand the process of improvement, but she said the language that is in the Ordinance does say administrative reorganization and amend the City Charter. She stated for the record in the Charter section 7-04 Amending or Repealing the Charter basically it



talks about if you do this, then you have to take it to a special election.

Mr. Creekbaum said section 4-11 this is accomplished by Ordinance, administrative reorganization the same as other provisions of the Charter.

Ms. Woods said she thinks the fact that the ordinance says reorganizing “and” amending instead of or is something she wanted to state for the record.

Mr. Marshall noted he had the opportunity to speak with Mr. McCallister and Ms. Ellen Hill, Director of Planning and Urban Development, and he thinks all sides are pretty much okay with the move, but he thinks there were some concerns during the change which he has heard before. He said he thinks when the City is making these changes the City should make sure all parties involved are on board. He said Ms. Hill does a lot of great work for the City and Mr. McCallister does as well and they don’t want to discredit anyone. He further noted coming from the Planning and Zoning Board he has heard some concerns coming from both parties but when the City makes a change, he wants everyone to understand why they are making that change.

Ms. Woods stated the correct terminology that she meant to say is the City has a material modification which concerns her because section 4 says one thing and section 7 is saying something different. She further stated when we use the word amend or repeal she thinks that’s when we put ourselves at risk for having to have a special election.

Mr. Harvey noted he has looked at the Charter and it spells out exactly how to deal with things like the City is doing. He further noted he received plenty of calls over the last 24 hours and ultimately he approach many problems like a system because people move over time, and this somehow became about people when you hear a lot of the chatter. He said systems are systems and we acknowledge the inefficiencies in our systems, and he appreciates any effort to try and solve that.

Mrs. Dawson stated the City is in the 2000’s and sometimes we have to move and change with the times. She further stated she has gotten a lot of phone calls regarding the process since she has been on the Council, and she said most of the time when she gets phone calls, she transfers the calls to Engineering. She noted she is all for this being streamlined to help the people in the City to get things done in a quick manner with quality service.

Mrs. Ezernack noted it’s about the people of the community and making sure they’re moving their project forward. She said as for the City projects being open brings in sales tax and things of that nature. She further noted time is money and if someone’s project gets delayed for any reason, that’s costing them money because they can’t open their doors. She said she thinks the process improvements will become a great benefit to our community over time. She said they all get concerns from their constituents and the City will still have hiccups but it’s about the process, the organization, and the people in the community.

The Chairman closed the Hearing seeing no one come forward.

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved an Ordinance No. 12,193 amending and adjusting the City of Monroe Operating Budget for the fiscal year 2023-2024. (Admin.) (There were no public comments.)

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing:

(e) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey seconded by Mrs. Dawson and approved an Ordinance No. 12,194 to 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, 1705 Reed Street, said the project can be confusing to the public because it hasn’t been explained where the funds are coming from. He said there has only been one request from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for an electric bus and the public hasn’t had any answers about this project. He said people know how he feels about the Transit management system, and he just doesn’t trust them to handle such projects.

Mr. Marc Keenan, Transit General Manager, stated the City has been working on this \$5.5 million project since 2019 which requires a little over 4 million in federal dollars. He further stated of the \$4 million the City has all but \$100,000 allocated for those funds and project.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if Mr. Payne’s question was answered.

Mr. Payne said he knew where the funding was coming from, which was supposedly the FTA but there has only been one request.

Mrs. Stacy Rowell, Director of Administration, noted there are about four different grants funding this project and the City is only responsible for 20% of the \$5.5 million.

Mr. Payne said the City is using 80% to purchase the land and it is not clear who is going to fund that project. He said the rest of the project such as the building hasn't been mentioned.

Mrs. Ezernack said it is her understanding that all but \$100,000 for this particular project the City has the funding already from different grants.

Mr. Payne wanted to know if the grants are coming from the FTA.

Mrs. Ezernack noted the grants are coming from various entities.

Mr. Keenan stated 80% of the cost is coming from the federal government.

Mr. Payne wanted to clarify that the funding is coming from the FTA.

Mr. Keenan said the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) and it has to come through the State, but it is Transit dollars.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, said the ordinance is a zoning map amendment and the property has already been purchased.

Mr. Payne said the public is still confused on the funding to purchase the property.

Mrs. Ezernack said from what she is understanding the project has already been funded. She said the Council is amending the zoning and she wanted to know if Mr. Payne had any questions about the zoning.

Mr. Payne said no.

The Chairman closed the Hearing seeing no one come forward.

Ms. Woods stated for the record she is opposed to moving the bus terminal from downtown. She said she feels that if the City leaves the terminal downtown because the City is looking to bring Amtrak here, it makes more sense to have them closer to each other. She said they would be one or two blocks from each other opposed to being ten blocks. She further stated she believes the terminal right now is at North 4<sup>th</sup> and the City is talking about moving it to North 18<sup>th</sup>. She said the City have several housing developments downtown, one of which is for seniors and a lot of seniors aren't mobile and they use the transit system to move back and forth. She said she thinks it would put the seniors at an imposition and a lot of people use transit to go to their jobs and with that being said she voted no.

#### CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

(1.) Lester Pastor, 100 South Point Drive Apt. 301, stated on March 14<sup>th</sup> he passed out the order of Court of Appeal to the City Council and the Mayor. He said the order of Court of Appeal is his right to appeal a case that the Monroe City Court should have never had this case before their court. He further stated an order for new proceedings has not taken place and the document he passed out to the Council is from Attorney Nancy Summersgill saying she dismissed the Order of Court of Appeal which is a violation of the law. He said at the last City Council meeting Mr. Harvey stated for the record the City Council and the Mayor have nothing to do with the Order of Court of Appeal being carried out. He said the City Council and the Mayor took an oath for office and the Mayor hired Attorney James Pierre who refused to carry out the Court of Appeal. He said Mr. Pierre was hired by the Mayor and when he refused to do his job it is up to the Mayor to inform him that he must obey the law. He said if the Mayor doesn't do it, it is up to the City Council. He said the order of Court of Appeal is rule of law which is supposed to lift law above politics and every powerful person and agent in the land. He said he will continue to protest to demand that this order is carried out.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 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

