

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
November 8, 2022
6:00p.m.

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

The Honorable Chairman Kema Dawson, 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 Dawson announced that a quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance would be led by Ms. Woods or her designee.

The Invocation was led by Reverend Levi Cyrus Senior Pastor at Evening Star Baptist Church.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Harvey welcomed everyone to the Council meeting.

Mrs. Ezernack welcomed everyone to the meeting this evening and she thanked Reverend Cyrus for his wonderful prayer.

Ms. Woods said she hopes everyone had the opportunity to vote but if not, there is still time. She thanked Pastor Cyrus for his powerful prayer. She said he is appreciated, and she is happy he resides in District 3.

Mr. Marshall thanked everyone for coming out to the Council meeting. He said November is "Buy Black Month" and he encouraged everyone to support all minority black businesses in the area. He stated "Ease on Down to Healthcare" is Saturday at Lida-Benton Park from 12pm until 4pm. He further stated there will be tons of health resources, vendors, financial educators, food, and games.

Mrs. Dawson introduced the City Council's new hire Ms. Rachel Washington, Research Coordinator, for the City of Monroe. She said she is the liaison between the City Council and the community. She said if you call the City Council office between 8am until 5pm and you need someone to come out immediately to respond Ms. Washington is the person to reach out too. She noted the number to the City Council office is 318-329-2261. On another note, Ms. Dawson expressed her condolences to Mr. Donterrio Anderson his mother passed away a few weeks ago and she asked everyone to keep him in their prayers. She said he is a great asset in the community. She asked everyone to keep lifting him up and keep him encouraged. She stated on tomorrow the Department of Children and Family Services hiring fair will be from 10am until 2pm at 24 Accent Drive. She said the opportunities include Administrative Coordinator, Child Welfare Specialist trainee, and Social Services Analysts. She further stated the Chennault Aviation Military Museum presents a Veterans Day tree lighting ceremony on Friday November 11, 2022 at 5pm. She said food will be served starting at 3pm and everyone is invited.

Mayor Friday Ellis said the City of Monroe had a big week and if the City continues to have weeks like this, he thinks the community will see a better future for Monroe. He said the City was happy to host the Transportation for America and the Southern Rail Commission to talk about expansion of Amtrak through I-20. He said Senator Bill Cassidy and Senator Cindy Hyde Smith joined the City throughout the week. He said the City spoke with Executives from Amtrak, Surface Transportation Board, DOTD of Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama to talk about what the future rail looks like across I-20. He noted with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) it will soon be a reality and he appreciate the time everyone has put in. He further noted he is excited to add this form of transportation for the City's students, families, and business industries. He stated another groundbreaking announcement that brought Governor John Bel Edwards to the City of Monroe was the address for the Biomedical Research and Innovation Park. He said this is a great collaboration between the University of Louisiana at Monroe and the community. He further stated it has gained great momentum from the Governor and federal funding sources which is another great addition to the City of Monroe. On another note, the Mayor said the City is proud to announce the Cooley House received a Saving America's Treasure Grant which is also \$500,000.00 for restoring a historic piece of property that has International significance. He said the Grand Opening of I-20 South Frontage Road is another step toward opening up development along I-20. He stated the City had a press conference with U.S. Attorney Brandon Brown and the hard work he has done to move up violent repeat offenders in our community. He noted the Kansas Lane extension Phase 1 has been awarded which is a 30-year project on a 4 -year timeline to be completed. He stated another great project the City was joined by Councilman Marshall for an Urban System

project on South Grand to help with the surface milling overlay and much needed sidewalks. He further stated another milling overlay project will be on Lee Avenue which will be announced in the future. On a different note, the Mayor said to join the City on social media which will give the community points of contact for issues. He said it will assist the community to direct them to the right department whether it's a bathroom in the park that needs servicing, fence need mending, or a pothole.

Mrs. Dawson noted the correct date for the hiring fair at the Department of Children and Family Services building is Thursday November 10, 2022, at 24 Accent Drive.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of October 25, 2022, were unanimously approved. (There were no public comments.)

PRESENTATION: Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to remove a presentation by Doug Mitchell, Executive Director: North Delta Regional Planning & Dev. District Reapportionment Plan (Redirecting) (There were no public comments.)

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to consider an application by Futayyeh Higgins dba Sista's Daqs & Wings, 2304 Desiard Street, Monroe LA 71201 for a New 2022 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.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and approved to consider an application by Houssein A. Ahmed dba Friendly Mart and Deli, 3700 Jackson St, Monroe LA 71202 for a New 2022 Class B Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (Distance Report Cleared, Cert. of Occupy Cleared) (Mr. Marshall & Ms. Woods Nay)

Ms. Vevlyn Wright, 415 Gulpha West Monroe, requested to the Council Chair that she reads the entire agenda item for people to know what the item is about. She said this is a request from the citizenry of all 4 corners of the City. On another note, she stated it is déjà vu all over again with another business that wants to sale alcoholic beverages in an area that already has too many purveyors of alcoholic beverages. She said this one differs from Family Dollar or Dollar General that it is not just asking for beer and wine but liquor. She further stated she will not repeat all of the reasons that were stated for the Council to not allow the permit for Family Dollar because the Council knows these are not good businesses to have in this neighborhood. She said she is speaking on behalf of people from all 4 corners of the City. She noted people have been talking to her for weeks and coming up to her at events to say they appreciate the things she has been saying. She said a lot of these people have stage fright and don't want to come speak to the Council. She said she is asking the City Council to put a moratorium on all businesses that hope to sale alcoholic beverages in Districts 3, 4, and 5 until further research. She said these are not good businesses for Districts 3, 4, and 5 that are trying to recover from a decline. She further noted there are children that go into these establishments and if the Council recalls a month ago Attorney Davis pleaded with the City Council to not let the alcohol permit go forward. She said the Council can pause until further study and still be within legal requirements to not find themselves in danger of litigation.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know what position the Council has on this item because the company has met all of the qualifications.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, Assistant City Attorney, said there are set guidelines and rules in the City Ordinance that establish what the qualifications are to obtain an alcohol permit. He said there is a set of criteria under State law that says these are the parameters that have to be met to obtain a license under State law. He stated to his understanding they meet all of those qualifications and when there is a published set of guidelines that govern what the criteria are to obtain a license, it starts to deviate from those published set of criteria. He said the Council may or may not run the risk of being determined arbitrary and capricious.

Ms. Wright came back to speak.

Ms. Dawson stated we are in the Council's questions section and the public comments period is over.

Ms. Wright stated she would like to respond based on what the Attorney stated.

Mrs. Dawson reiterated the Council is in a different section of the meeting now.

Ms. Wright wanted to know what section of the meeting the Council is on now.

Ms. Dawson informed her this section is for the Council comments, and she asked her to please be seated.

(After numerous attempts of over talking the Council Chair, Ms. Wright was escorted out.)

Mr. Marshall wanted to clarify if the business was located next to the Now & Save on Jackson Street.

Mr. Creekbaum said he believes so.

Ms. Ezernack wanted to clarify that the community can have different regulations that differ from what the State regulations are if they choose to make changes to the City Ordinances or not.

Mr. Creekbaum said within the body of State law it says governing locals' authorities such as the Council have the authority to set rules and regulations governing the issues of permits. He said there is some language in the State law that says no permit shall be not excepted for ground set forth in the chapter, which is why our law generally track State law. He noted the City doesn't have any qualifications that differs from State law than those that already exist. He further noted whether the City has the authority to do so or not he would have to research further. He said there have been conversations about moratoriums at Council meetings in the past that have to also be further researched. He said other municipalities have tried but had some public issues and other potential legal issues.

Legal Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8391 authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into an Agreement for Legal Services with McGlinchey Stafford PLLC and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mayor's Office:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8392 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the City of Monroe and Biomedical Research and Innovation Park and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8393 establishing "Keep Monroe Beautiful" as part of City Government, adopting Bylaws, and further providing with respect thereto. (Ms. Woods Nay)

Ms. Kenya Roberson, 116 Glenwood, wanted to know if this is the first time this is being done this way.

Ms. Kelsea McCrary, Chief Cultural & Economic Development Officer, said the City reached out to Ouachita Green, Keep West Monroe Beautiful, and Keep Louisiana Beautiful and Mr. Cabell Mouton, Affiliate and Grant Director, provided the City with template bylaws to be able to incorporate the organization and make it an official affiliate of the State program.

Ms. Roberson wanted to clarify that the board consist of one appointee from the City Council and the Mayor has four appointees.

Ms. McCrary said that is correct.

Ms. Roberson wanted to know will the Executive Director for this board be a paid position.

Ms. McCrary said as of right now no.

Ms. Roberson wanted to clarify if the Mayor can remove any person from the board whether it's his appointee or not.

Ms. McCrary said yes, according to the templates they received.

Ms. Roberson wanted to know if this is a two-year term for all board designees.

Ms. McCrary said yes.

Ms. Roberson wanted to clarify the reason it needed to be structured this way and she wanted to know if the past way wasn't working.

Ms. McCrary said yes, historically Keep Monroe Beautiful has been housed by Community Affairs but as of right now the City doesn't have an official organization. She said there is no organization to accept funds and to get in line with State Statute which is why this item is on the agenda.

Ms. Roberson stated this will put the organization in compliance to apply for funding.

Ms. McCrary said no, it is for it to be an official affiliate meaning the City will get grabbers, trash bags, and grants sometimes.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, said it is hard to understand why they need a board, but the Mayor has the authority to override the board like a dictatorship. She said talking about getting grabbers and papers, but the City already does. She said there is nothing the citizens have an opinion about its all relying on the Mayor. She said the Mayor will be the head of this board and about 6 months ago the Mayor became the head of the Economic Development.

Ms. McCrary said she is over the Economic Development.

Ms. Brown stated she read it was the Mayor who was voted into that position.

Ms. McCrary asked Ms. Brown to send her the information and she can verify it for clarity.

Ms. Brown stated it seems anything on the agenda needs a designee to make decisions but when it comes to beautification of the board the Mayor is running it, but they see nothing wrong with it.

Ms. McCrary said Keep Monroe Beautiful has always been the Mayor's office initiative and the item on the agenda gives the City the right structure to be able to make it a more community driven board. She said the Mayor has four appointees due to the fact Community Affairs and Public Works has a huge role. She stated the Executive Director will eventually be a community member but as of right now they don't have that type of engagement to put anybody in that position. She further stated Ms. Audi Brown, Ouachita Green, couldn't be here tonight but she can connect Ms. Brown with her for her to better understand how this works for the City to be affiliates.

Mr. Creekbaum said this is not a separate independent board or a statutory board. He said it is part of the Executive Branch that is why the Mayor oversees the board.

Department of Community Affairs:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8394 authorizing a designated city representative into a Cooperative Purchasing Agreement with LAMATS for the purchase of the Benoit Community Center Playground Equipment in the amount \$249,424.50 by and between the City of Monroe and Kincade Recreation, LLC and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Marshall, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8395 authorizing a designated city representative to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the City of Monroe, the Monroe City School Board and the Boys and Girls Club of North Louisiana related to after school programs and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Kenya Roberson wanted to know if the City will pay the salaries of four of the Boys and Girls Club employees.

Mr. Creekbaum noted the agreement says the City will provide funding to three trained youth development professionals and one lead staff person.

Ms. Roberson wanted to know if the Boys and Girls Club will be doing tutorial.

Mr. Harvey said after school tutoring is a big part of their program.

Mrs. Ezernack stated they are a members of the National Boys and Girls Club which is actually one of their lead programs. She further stated she was on their board many years ago and this is something they excel at with many years of experience.

Ms. Roberson wanted to know if the program will be at two recreational sites.

Mr. Eldonta' Osborne, CEO, said that is correct.

Ms. Roberson wanted to know if the programs will be at any of the recreation centers that the Monroe City Academy League is located.

Mayor Ellis said this not to compete at the same recreation centers that MCAL is located.

Ms. Roberson stated she is very familiar with both programs, and she knows how hard MCAL has worked but wanted to be sure it wasn't a competitive thing. She said she supports the program and thinks it is a great program.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, said she applauds the program but had one issue with giving out the children's information to the City.

Mr. Osborne said no, there is no exchange of personal identifiable information, and they don't even receive that information from the schools. He said their only concern is the children's academic performance and the areas they may need assistance.

Ms. Brown stated from the Council packet the obligation of BGC under this agreement is to maintain a list of after school program participants and addresses for two years following the year in which said participation was reported and the information shall be made available to the City upon request.

Mr. Osborne noted that is the participants address that is not their performance.

Ms. Brown wanted to know why share their addresses which is easily tracked to them.

Mayor Ellis stated that is for audit purposes and if the program is receiving any type of public funds, they have to keep a record of their students. He said if a Legislative auditor or somebody comes to ask are they serving the kids, records of that has to be kept.

Ms. Brown wanted to know why share the children's information with the City if Mr. Osborne is running the program. She said she can understand the audit coming to Mr. Osborne, but it says upon request of the City.

Mrs. Ezernack said she believes it is because this is a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement.

Ms. Brown stated the way the children are tracked through their address is a whole different thing. She said she thinks that should be looked at and be taken out.

Mr. Harvey thanked Mr. Osborne for his leadership and for bringing these programs to Monroe.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, Assistant City Attorney, said to make sure the record is clear, this agreement sets forth the City's and the BGC obligations. He said it also includes a section for the Monroe City School Board but to his understanding they haven't voted on the agreement yet. He noted the Monroe School Board may or may not make changes to their section, but any vote they take will not impact the rest of the agreement.

Police Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8396 authorizing Mayor Friday Ellis to sign and accept a Louisiana Highway Safety Enforcement Commission Grant for the 2023 fiscal year grant and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Engineering Services:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved to remove item (a) from the agenda authorizing a designated city representative to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the City of Monroe and the Office of Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) for the Kansas Lane-Garrett Road Connector and I-20 Interchange Improvements Projects and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods wanted to know why this item is being removed.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, said this is a reimbursement agreement between the airport and Louisiana DOTD and there was an item in there that included \$180,000.00 for construction reimbursement. He said after speaking with Garver Engineering he believes the amount is too low and he wanted to make sure they can capture all reimbursable invoices.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved a Resolution No. 8397 accepting as substantially complete work done by and between Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) and Alpha Services and Products, Inc., for guardrail installation in the City of Monroe, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to remove item (a) from the agenda adopting a Reapportionment Plan for Monroe City Council Districts in accordance with the 2020 Census of Population and Appropriate Federal and State Laws, and Section 2-02 of the Home Rule Charter of the City of Monroe and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

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

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

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved an Ordinance No. 12,141 authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of the property described below and sell to B & R Pest Control Professionals LLC all rights, title, and interest that the City

may have acquired to the Lot 6, Sq. 62, Layton's 3rd Addition, Ouachita Parish, 612 S. 2nd St., District 4, Monroe, La, by Adjudication at Tax Sale dated May 18, 2016, and further with respect thereto. (Legal) (There were no public comments.)

CITIZENS PARTICIPATION:

Ms. Kenya Roberson, 116 Glenwood, said this is Buy Black month and there is a calendar of events coming up. She stated on November 12th they all will be eating at the Cookout on Desiard Street all day. She said also on November 12th from 6pm until 8pm they will be at Haley Beckwith's Love Lit Candle Bar and there is a charge seats are limited. She further stated on November 19th Jazz on the Que with the Bros. and November 20th they will be doing a bike ride with Bike It Out 318. She said the events will continue to be marketed on social media and hopefully they will see some of the community at some of the events.

Ms. Marie Brown, 1002 South 5th Street, said most of the City Council are ministers but they prepare alcohol at every Council meeting. She said the Council is not listening to the constituents and constantly not focusing on Districts 3, 4, and 5. She said she feels the infrastructure is good because they are not under the Consent Decree anymore. She said the community understands if those pipes aren't fixed in Districts 3, 4, and 5 the City will be fined. She said the money being spent on the pipes is not enough money. She said the City was waiting on \$300,000.00 before this Administration and the City wants to spend that money on 11 projects in Districts 3, 4, and 5 and clearly someone will be left out. She said she doesn't think the majority of the Council care about what their constituents have to say or think. She said the Council doesn't have the decency to look at the community's complaints for tonight. She said she doesn't know what the Council is thinking, and they think they don't have to answer to their constituents. She said she doesn't have the luxury of not coming up saying something because the citizens need to understand the Council works for their constituents. She said she hates they are always under the threat of being thrown out of Council meetings when they are passionate about what they are saying.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m., upon motion of Mr. Harvey and it was seconded by Mr. Marshall.

Mrs. Kema Dawson
Chairman

Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Ileana Murray
Staff Secretary