

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana  
January 14, 2025  
6:00p.m.

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

There were present: Mr. Harvey, Mrs. Ezernack, Ms. Woods, Mr. McFarland, & Mr. Muhammad

There was absent: None

Chairman Woods announced that a quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance would be led by Mr. Harvey or his designee.

The Invocation was led by City Engineer Morgan McCallister.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

(1.) Mr. Harvey said Happy New Year!

(2.) Mrs. Ezernack said Happy New Year!

(3.) Mr. McFarland said Happy New Year to everyone, and he thanked God for allowing them to see another year. He said there is work on Winnsboro Road and they are glad to see the new sidewalks being put down. He said the constituents on the Southside are very happy with the progress and movement on the Southside they want to keep it going. On another note, he announced the passing of District 4's Pastor Inez Walker, Refuge Healing Church, who passed away on yesterday. He said to please continue to pray with and for the family and the public visitation will be at the Greater Free Gift Baptist Church on Friday 1 o'clock until 5pm. He said the services will be 11am at the Jack Howard Theater at the Monroe Civic Center on Saturday. He stated she was the founder of her church since it has been in existence. He said they have been friends ever since he has been pastoring in Monroe.

(4.) Mr. Muhammad said Happy New Year to everyone, and he reminded everyone of the two Martin Luther King Programs. He noted one by the City of Monroe tomorrow at 10am at the Civic Center and another on Monday the 20<sup>th</sup> a Martin Luther King parade from the Civic Center to Eastgate. He said on that evening the program will be at Walk In the Word church in Monroe.

(5.) Ms. Woods said good evening, and she thanked everyone for coming. She said it is good to see everyone and Happy New Year. She stated everybody was watching the news on last week when the family of four in Winnsboro perished in a house fire and a large part of the Jones family is from Monroe. She said keep them lifted up in prayer because she thinks the granddaughter lived here in Monroe but was visiting her grandmother in Winnsboro. She said they were all funeralized this past Sunday. On another note, she said her monthly Chat and Chew has been cancelled for the month of January because typically it would be tomorrow, and it is being cancelled in lieu of the Martin Luther King celebration. She said they will be back on schedule for the month of February.

Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack and seconded by Mr. McFarland, and the minutes of the Legal and Regular session of December 23, 2024, were unanimously approved. (Mr. Harvey abstain he was not present at the last City Council Meeting) (There were no public comments.)

PROPOSED CONDEMNATIONS:

(1.) 1005 S. 5<sup>th</sup> (D4) – Owner: Howard Horn. Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. Tommy James, Code Enforcement Officer, stated this is an unsafe dilapidated structure with extremely high grass and debris all over the house. They are asking that the property be condemned.

Mr. McFarland motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to bring the structure up to code. He said if not move forward.

(2.) 918 Bethune St. (D5) – Owner: Estate of Hazel Logan c/o Maxine Collins Eddie Logan c/o Maxine Collins. Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. James stated this is also a very dilapidated structure and they are asking that the property be condemned.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if anyone lives in it.

Mr. James said there are vagrants in and out.

Mr. Muhammad motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to bring the structure up to compliance with the code.

(3) 619 Wilson St. (D5) – Owner: Lonnie and Janie Hayes. Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. James said this is also an open dilapidated structure and they want to condemn this property as well.

Mr. Muhammad motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to bring the structure up to compliance with the code.

(4) 4303 Barlow St. (D3) – Owner: Khadijah and Jamal K. Davis. Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. James noted there has been contact with this particular homeowner and the resident said they hope to have it demolished themselves. He said they are asking the property be condemned just in case and this is an open structure with extremely high grass

Ms. Woods motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to tear down the property themselves or bring it up to code.

(5) 1910 Olive St. (D3) – Owner: Wiley C. Yearby c/o Karen Quinn. Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. James said this is a burnt dilapidated and unsafe structure and they are asking that the property be condemned.

Ms. Woods motion to condemn this property giving the owner 30 days to tear the structure down themselves and bring it up to code.

(6) 404 N. 25<sup>th</sup> St. (D3) – Owner: Estate of Francis P. Reddix, et al Estate of Raymond & GERALYN Pierce, et al Sandra and Ibrania Amin. Notice to show cause was served. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days in which to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the Structure and clean the lot. (There were no public comments.)

Mr. James stated this is also a dilapidated structure with holes in the roof and vagrants in and out. They are asking that the property be condemned.

Ms. Woods motion to condemn the property giving the owner 30 days to bring the structure up to code and rid it if all obnoxious debris.

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Council:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8869 appointing Carolyn Lewis to the Monroe Board of Adjustment. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods stated Ms. Lewis isn't here today because she is a little under the weather. She said she offered her thanks for being asked to serve in this capacity.

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8870 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin Cities Krewe of Janus (Mardi Gras Parade) pursuant to the Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Franz Hill, 1700 Auburn Avenue, stated the Krewe of Janus have permission to walk up and down the street igniting explosive charges. He said letting them violate the Open Container Ordinance also means they can be drunk doing that and he said he would speak toward the Janus parade later.

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8871 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin Cities Krewe of De Riviere (Mardi Gras Parade) pursuant to the Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and failed to adopt a Resolution providing for canvassing the returns and declaring the results of the Special Election held by the City of Monroe, State of Louisiana, on Saturday, December 7, 2024, and to promulgate the results thereof. (There were no public comments.) (Ms. Woods, Mr. McFarland, and Mr. Muhammad Nay)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to consider nine (9) Renewal Applications for a New 2025 Class A Alcoholic Beverage permit. The Monroe Police has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved to consider six (6) Renewal Applications for a New 2025 Class B Alcoholic Beverage permit. The Monroe Police has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no public comments.)

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved to consider two (2) Renewal Applications for a New 2025 Class E Alcoholic Beverage permit. The Monroe Police has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no public comments.)

Engineering Services:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8872 approving Close-out Change order No. One (1) for the Lakeside Drive Water Improvements Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8873 approving Close-out Change Order No. One (1) for the 1401 Stubbs Ave. Office Renovations Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

(a) Upon motion of Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved to Passover item (a) to Introduce an Ordinance declaring a ± 0.146 acre tract of immovable property (north ½ of a revoked portion of Grammont Street) no longer necessary for public use and

authorizing said property to be sold at private sale to Choice Brands, Inc. until the next City Council meeting January 28, 2025.

Mr. Frank DeTiege, 1604 Dilling Street, thanked the Council and citizens for the opportunity to address them today. He said he and his wife are the property owners of 216 Collier Avenue adjacent to the City owned property that is currently under consideration for sale. He expressed his concern regarding the proposed sale and how it may affect his property and the City's access to the water tower. He said for some time now City utility vehicles and workers have been using his property to access the water tower. He stated it has been done without his authorization which has caused ongoing damage to his land. He said this has been a source of frustration and concern for him as a property owner. He said the issue becomes even more pressing now that there is a proposal to sale the adjacent City owned land. He further stated he is unsure how the sale will impact the accessibility of the water tower especially since the other access route is blocked. He said the small bridge leading to that route is in disrepair. He noted before this property is sold he has several questions and considerations he would like to propose. He wanted to know if there has been any consideration for how City utility vehicle will access the water tower in the future. He wanted to know if there will be an alternative route put in place that avoids his property. He wanted to know how will the City ensure the access of the water tower will not infringe his property rights, and what measures will be taken to prevent further unauthorized use of his land by City vehicles and workers. He said given the current state of the bridge which has collapsed he wanted to know if the City explored options to repair or replace the bridge. He said in the original plan for the water tower engineers saw it necessary to have multiple entry points for access and he said should some consideration be given to understand why this was deemed necessary. He said will the sale of this alter the terms of existing agreements regarding access to the water tower if so how will those changes be communicated to property owners like him. He said how will the City compensate or address the damages that have already been done to his property as a result of unauthorized use. He said if the property is sold to another business entity how will the City ensure that new owners respect property boundaries and don't attempt to use his land for access without permission. He said he is asking these questions be given careful consideration before any decisions are made regarding the sale of the property.

Mrs. Ezernack stated for Mr. DeTiege to be sure to give the Council a copy of his questions in written format. She said that will be very helpful to get Mr. DeTiege questions answered before the ordinance comes back up for next time.

Mr. Harvey wanted to know if there is any feedback on the right of way at this point. He said he was looking at the overhead map, but he doesn't see access at that bridge.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, said some of these issues were discussed when this matter came up for revocation because the property was originally a dead end road. He said in May of last year there was an ordinance revoking the portion of the roadway from the corner of Stanley and Grammont back to the dead end. He said at that time Stanley was already closed off for quite some time and as far as right of way access he is not exactly sure where the bridge is.

Mr. Muhammad stated it's on Stanley near the water tower and it is blocked off on both ends. He said this is their concern that the City can't access the water tower without going through the DeTiege's property, He wanted to know what is going on with the bridge and he said it has been out for years now.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, stated there are no current plans at this moment to open the bridge. He said months ago part of the revocation the southern portion of that right of way went to Choice Brands and the Northern portion is the City of Monroe. He said in regard to access it is his understanding that access by public works is done on Grammont Street, and they are not accessing from Stanley.

Mr. Muhammad said half the street is Choice Brands and they are proposing to buy the other half.

Mr. McCallister stated as part of revocation the two owners agreed that the City of Monroe owns property on the North and Choice Brands own property on the Southside. He said when that street is officially revoked the right of ways go to the adjacent property owners.

Mr. Muhammad said if they own the street they don't have to allow the City to come out.

Mr. McCallister said the Choice Brands Representative and Engineer are here in case they need to answer any of those questions. He stated there were conversations before the revocation if they were to acquire the property the City of Monroe Public Works would get access through their property by way of ingress egress agreement to maintain the water infrastructure. He said the City will have no problem getting in doing what they need to do by that agreement that will put in place.

Mr. McFarland said it seems as if the City has been cutting across Mr. DeTiege's property beforehand and did damage to his property. He said before he was on the Council a portion of Adams Street was sold, and his constituents are now upset over the fact they can't drive down Adams Street. He said now they want to sale a portion of this street for \$12,500 and to him that is peanuts. He said hearing the complaint from Mr. DeTiege this is problematic to him and has heard from other constituents the bad choice that was made concerning Adams Street. He said now the City is getting ready to do the same thing again and there is an issue with someone cutting across the property as if they don't care. He said there is no way he can support this in no shape, form, or fashion the way it is presented. He said he feels the Adams Street project was a lesson learned.

Mr. McCallister said Adams Street is a completely different situation and the property owners both North and South of that section of road are James Machine Works. He said when that section of roadway was revoked it went to James Machine Works only and for the safety of the workers. He said nothing was sold to James Machine Works. He noted doing his site visit he doesn't know how 216 Collier is affected. He further noted if it is that needs to be addressed and through this agreement they would travel down Grammont through the given access by Choice Brands and turn into the existing driveway to the City of Monroe water tower.

Mr. Muhammad said he would like to hear from Choice Brands to know their plans and he wanted to know if the City could sale half a street.

Mr. Creekbaum said this is not a sale of half a street and only a portion of Grammont was revoked. He said from Stanley back where the bollards are to the dead end.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if the ditch would be a right of way for the City. He said the wooden stakes are in the boundary of the DeTiege's property and back toward the water tower. He said they don't know what Choice Brands is going to do and they may expand into the street then the City can't access the water tower.

Mr. McFarland stated if it becomes there property they have the right to do whatever they want to do.

Mr. Creekbaum said to answer the original question of how to purchase half a roadway, when this was revoked from Stanley to the dead of the right of way ditch of whatever. He said the road ceased to exist and it is not a legal roadway anymore.

Mr. Muhammad made a substitute motion that the Council pass over this item to answer Mr. DeTiege's questions.

Mr. Jeff Elkins, Owner of Choice Brands, said Mr. Don Arrington did the site work and from what he knows they are purchasing half of the property to build a 27,000 foot expansion in the back for all the truck docks. He said they will be coming out a side gate up Grammont Street, but they have nothing to do with anything close to the tower. He said the only thing that will affect Grammont Street is pass Stanley. He said he doesn't think it is any part of Mr. DeTiege's property, and they will be using that street for pulling tracker trailers out and have a road wide enough.

Mr. Don Arrington, 2700 Herbert Cole Drive, Civil Engineer SE Huey Company, noted they started working with Choice Brands probably two years ago and they wanted to expand their property. The problem was the property wasn't large enough to do what they needed to do. He said they were asked to find a way for them to stay where they were or start looking for other options that may or may not be in the City. He said they came to the City Engineer and spoke with the Mayor who worked with everybody to keep tax dollars here in the City of Monroe. He said part of that plan for their truck movement was to see if there was a possibly to revoke the road beyond Stanley. He said they looked at the water tower and there was no consideration to cutting off the water. He said it is not half the road and there is a small portion of property that the City owns.

Mr. Muhammad said he needs to know what they plan to do with it because they could put a building there and block off entrance to the water tower.

Mr. Arrington said the plans have been put out and bid on and can be provided.

Mr. McFarland said don't put it on the table, as if the Council don't they will go outside the City, and he said that turns him completely off. He said he doesn't play those kind of shenanigans and they are listening to a complaint from a property owner that had some issues. He said he comes up here and try to throw in the Council face they just trying to stay in the City. He said they have to hear from property owners and constituents and the Council is concerned about them also. He said don't ever paint that picture with him like they should disregard what the constituents are saying and just go along with him.

Mr. Arrington apologized and stated that it was not his intent.

Ms. Woods noted Mr. Muhammad had a substitute motion he wanted to make and for the sake of time and so much uncertainly. She said definitely she doesn't want to see their business leave her district and the City of Monroe in particular. She said she was on the Council when they voted to allow them that expansion and she voted in favor of it because she realized that expansion would bring additional dollars into the community. She said based on Mr. DeTiege, who is also a property owner and businessperson in district 3 she would like for the Council to go back to the drawing board and have that conversation. She said maybe table this and bring back at the next meeting for another introduction and then everyone is kind of clear of where they are going with this.

Mrs. Sylvia DeTiege, 1604 Dilling Street, stated her and her husband are all for progress and they love that Choice Brands is expanding as long as it doesn't affect their property, She said if Monroe City vehicles are able to get to the water tower without touching her property; they are good.

Mr. Muhammad said they can have Mr. DeTiege's questions answered and bring it back. He said he just doesn't want them to put a building there then they can't access the water tower.

Mr. McFarland said or, that the property owner can't get to his property. He said they have to have something else in place before they can just move forward.

Mr. Elkins said they would be happy to show the DeTiege family the plans and do whatever they have to do to solve this issue. He said they don't want to block anybody's property and their plans that are out there now do not block their property. He said the issue he believes with the City vehicles accessing the tower he doesn't think that will change and they don't plan to put any buildings.

Mrs. Ezernack commented that Mr. Elkins meet with the DeTiege's and show them what they have planned. She said they couldn't put a building there because they have to get a building permit, and the City wouldn't allow it. She said someone should look into the issue of the City trucks going on to the DeTiege's property.

Mr. Harvey noted that seems to be the core issue that the City have trucks going through their property and they already have access to the road.

Mr. McCallister said he would like to coordinate a meeting between Choice Brands Ownership, the DeTiege family and Public Works in his office. He said they will go over this information and get everything lined out and get back to the Council. For the record, he said he missed stated something and he wanted to correct where the revocation begins pass Collier then the DeTiege property. He said then pass Stanley that is where the revocation begins than down Vermont.

Mr. McFarland said the Council has to be satisfied and they are the ones with the final say. He said after the meeting with DeTiege family Council need to have a meeting for them to all be on the same page. He said once they are satisfied then he will be satisfied.

Ms. Woods noted once Mr. McCallister talks to all parties then talking to the Council would be the next step.

Mr. Gene Tolliver, 1701 McKeen Place, said he is a friend of Mr. Jeff Elkins and Mr. DeTiege, and he said he think they both will be willing to meet with whatever City Officials they need to meet with and try to come to an understanding.

Mr. McFarland seconded the substitute motion to pass over this item until the next Council meeting.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of and sell to Kevin Lee, all rights, title, and interest that the City may have acquired to lot 3, N2 of lot 4, square F, Lovers Lane Addition, Ouachita Parish, 2705 Lee Ave, District 4, Monroe, La, by Adjudication at Tax Sale dated May 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack failed to Introduce an Ordinance amending Section 36-23(a) (Water Rates) of the City of Monroe Code and further providing with respect thereto.( Ms. Woods, McFarland, and Mr. Muhammad Nay) (There were no public comments.)

Mr. McFarland wanted to know about the water rates and what they are introducing on this item.

Mr. Creekbaum stated in general, Mrs. Rowell presented a water rate report on December 23, 2024, as required by the ordinance the Council passed on how water rates are annually reviewed and adjusted. He said Mrs. Rowell submitted her report recommending that the water rate be increased 2.7% across the board and suggested the Council and the Administration start a working group to find ways to look at adjusting how rates are structured in general for next cycle.

Mr. Muhammad said he thought they would do that this cycle.

Mr. Creekbaum said the Council have 30 days to act on the recommendation and he thought the 30 day period began when Mrs. Rowell sent the report. He said if the Council doesn't act within the 30 day period then Mrs. Rowell recommendation is put into effect.

Mr. McFarland said a vote to introduce this is vote to introduce an increase which he is not in favor of a water rate increase. He said the constituents and citizens of Monroe don't really know that because they cannot see the details as the Council can see. He said some are unaware of the fact that this information is placed on the City's website. He said when they come in for the meetings the get an abbreviated version of the agenda and they know absolutely nothing of the facts. He said what needs to be on record is that Mrs. Rowell is proposing a water rate increase of 2.7% and that means every year it continues to go up. He said they are not listening to the majority of the Council that have listened to there constituents that have cried out to the Council about water rate increase. He said they are at this junction again they do it, or they don't, and he is not in favor of introducing this because they should have looked at this little closer.

Mrs. Stacy Rowell, Director of Administration, noted that is his prerogative and that is why it is on the agenda.

Ms. Woods wanted to know the repercussions if the Council don't.

Mrs. Rowell said the most recent bond rating came out and the City was reduced to a triple B rating, and they were a double A plus. She said there were two or three different factors that played into that but the largest being that there was not going to be an automatic increase considered based on the CPI.

Ms. Woods wanted to know which ordinance.

Mr. Muhammad stated he put an ordinance in place to stop the automatic increases and task them to come up with other ways instead of putting the increase on the back of the citizens of Monroe every year. He said the committee they are wanting to put together can help to explore some of this because there are people outside the City buying water and businesses. He said he is not saying it doesn't need to be increase but he doesn't think it need to increase this year.

Mrs. Rowell noted in understanding to follow the last ordinance that was adopted that revoked the CPI increase that was put in place this had to come before the Council for them to not approve it. She said after this fails or whatever she will get with Ms. Woods to find who she would want on the working committee, and they will go forward looking at different rate structures as to how they can come up with different ways that it doesn't fall across the board increase.

Mr. Harvey wanted to know if this was a finding on the last audit that the City didn't have enough revenue in the last cycle relative to the 2018 bonds for the debt covenant.

Mrs. Rowell said it had to do with the City not covering the debt coverage ratio.

Mr. Harvey said last cycle the City were already deficient, which is not finding which part of how those bonds are written.

Mrs. Rowell stated though the City had an increase since then in May since that report and that was part of the problem the City is being reactive. She said they were 6 to 8 months down the road before they knew whether the rate increase would do us any good.

Mrs. Ezernack said she think the City did that a good while ago because the increase is in the cost of production and that was the index they were using.

Mrs. Rowell said it is not a producer, just CPI.

Mrs. Ezernack said to keep up with the increase in cost she wanted to know if there is something were the City is not supposed to be giving away product.

Mrs. Rowell wanted to clarify if Mrs. Ezernack means if the City is selling below cost.

Mr. Creekbaum stated there is always a general constitutional prohibition on the donation of public property. He said there are various test but in general absent explicit authority by the constitution a municipality can't give away that it owns or produces.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know if Mr. Creekbaum is saying at the rate the City is at today that the City has given away the water.

Mr. Creekbaum said he said no such thing.

Mr. McFarland said don't paint the picture and he kept tell them all he hears them. He said he knows they are playing with words, and he catch every word said.

Mr. Creekbaum said he answered the questions that are presented to him.

Mr. McFarland said again there was increase already and they really don't know that increase from last year would be suffice to carry the City through. He said it seems to him regardless of the fact that majority of the citizens of Monroe have task the Council to help them with this issue. The City still want to ignore the fact and keep moving forward of increasing the water rate. He questioned if the City can't bypass one year on increasing the water rates on the citizens of Monroe.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that it is a policy making function of which he has no involvement. He said he does not access whether there are cost associated with producing water , what the value of that water is to customers, and rather that rate is sufficient to cover those costs. He said he is not going to weigh in on the policy matter that is not his function and if there's a policy question he will always refer to the administration.

Mr. McFarland stated again the City want an increase without first knowing if last year's increase was suffice. He said that is what bothers him, and the City want to continue to put this burden on the backs of majority of the citizens of Monroe. He said the constituents cry was why the water rate is automatic every year. He said the City can't continue this way just automatically move it up every year and then say you don't know what is in place is good or not. He said why not see first before moving to an increase.

Mrs. Rowell noted the City was already not meeting the debt service coverage ratio and she can't speak to the cost of the water, but she can speak to that issue. She said revenues can be calculated up to a certain point what they are going to be, and expenditures are going to be but there are always some unknowns in there. She said she is speaking from the calculations standpoint and on April 30 the City didn't met it. She based on the prior ordinance an increase was put in place for May. The 14 cent is sufficient they are guessing.

Mr. Muhammad stated he want them to look deeper and explore other avenues. He said if they put together the committee he thinks they can explore some areas where people living outside the City



of Monroe, businesses by water, and how much they charging for taps. He said he is not going to support.

Mrs. Rowell said they had to bring this before the Council to turn it down or it would go into effect.

Mr. Muhammad said if the City is not meeting the debt service even they are asking for an increase every year there has to be something they have to do.

Mr. Harvey said he doesn't have a single thing that hasn't went up.

Mr. Muhammad said not every year.

Mrs. Rowell noted chemicals are going up every year.

Mr. Harvey said he hasn't had anything go up by 2.7 % in the last year.

Mrs. Rowell said there were some years that CPI was higher than what the City increases because they had a cap on it. He said that put them behind until hopefully they get caught up.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know what is causing the bond rate to drop.

Mrs. Rowell said the things she just mention.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know if the City made their payments on time.

Mrs. Rowell said yes sir.

Mr. McFarland said if the City is meeting all their obligations then that is problematic on someone's part. He said the Council again ask that the City review this and not put the increase on the backs of the citizens of Monroe. He said the majority of the citizens of Monroe have a problem with this and all the Council is saying is to take another look at it.

Mr. Harvey noted the City obligation is not just the debt payments. He said those bonds are written that the City maintain a 1.25 ratio which at the last audit the City didn't hit that obligation. He further noted not doing these increases is another version of not fulfilling that obligation and if the City keep doing that then bond rating falls.

Mr. Muhammad said the City had the increase last year and still didn't hit it.

Mrs. Rowell stated the City is behind the curve ball because there were increases in CPI cost of production or products. She said the production of water went up higher then what the City could increase their rate. She said the highest was 8.83% more than twice high then what the City increased the rate. She said the Council can vote on it and they will move on to the working committee.

Mr. McFarland called for the question.

(Mrs. Ezernack aye, Mr. Harvey aye, Mr. McFarland nay, Mr. Muhammad nay, and Ms. Woods nay)

Ms. Woods said by the Council voting this down means now the City can look at other options.

Mr. Creekbaum said the increase will not go into effect.

Ms. Woods said the City had an increase in May and if this had passed when would another increase been.

Mr. Creekbaum said May of this year.

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

##### The Chairman Open the Hearing:

Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,253 Establishing Comprehensive Violent Crime Victims' Rights and a Notification System for the City of Monroe and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Curtis Garth, 2300 Georgia Street, stated he is not up to date with this but when he looked at it it's talking about violent crime victim rights. He said he reported attempted murder against him

to the Monroe Police Department and the Council. He said Brandon Premier Department of Justice wrote him a letter saying the former Sheriff stole his identity. He said he wondering if these things are connected to the violent crime and since he reported these crimes nothing has been done about them even though he reported to the Monroe Police, but it wasn't investigated. He said he is telling to figure out how this item relates the crimes he has reported to the Council.

Ms. Woods said the Council had conversations with Mr. Garth regarding his issues and she is not sure how this is applicable to him one way or the other. She thanked him for the comments on this and she said Mr. Creekbaum has had conversation time after time with Mr. Garth.

Mr. Muhammad stated right now they are in a public hearing, and he will comment on this if it pass on how it can help what Mr. Garth is talking about.

Seeing no one coming forward the Chairman closed the hearing.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if there is a State law that talks about victims rights and if that is incorporated into this particular ordinance. She wanted to know if there are some exceptions to what the Stated law has that is in this ordinance.

Mr. Creekbaum said there is a State law that a lot of what is in the ordinance was borrowed from. He said in the ordinance there is a section that talks about the crime victim notice form that is a State law form that already exist. He said it provides several mandatory obligation to communicate with victims about the status of their case and allows them to not be interviewed in certain circumstances. He said there is a definition of violent crime put in the ordinance borrowed from State law applied and some of the materials that the State law already require officers to do with respect to victims' rights.

Mr. Muhammad said this ordinance is crafted to number one bring awareness to the community about violent crimes. He said a lot of violent crimes have been happening and the City isn't responsible whether the media hears about it or not. He said the main part of this is the victims rights and it says victims of violent crimes have the right to reasonable, accurate, and timely information involving the crime and the right to be notified. He noted he has talked several people that have lost loved ones in the City that haven't heard anything from law enforcement about what is happening with their loves one. He said the other part is they are going to create a Victim's Rights Advisory Board, and it would be charged with determining the effectiveness of this ordinance including the City's enforcement of the victim's right. He further noted Council members shall be notified in a reasonably practical manner when violent crime takes place in their community. He said there have been a lot of violent crimes where people called the Council asking if something happen and they have to verify. He said in this ordinance the Chief of Police, or his designee shall contact the Council so they can know if some has been murdered, and nobody has been arrested. He said that means somebody in the our is loss. He stated sometimes people just do not know what is going on and when somebody is murdered, and they go to Little Rock. He said they don't do autopsy in Monroe and if that is someone child they would want to know where there child went.

Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Muhammad to Passover item (b) to Finally adopt an Ordinance renaming East Street to Coach Ray Gambino Way until further notice. (There were no public comments.)

#### Citizen's Participation:

(1) Mr. Michael Castor, 3108 Garden Avenue, said there is a problem in the recreation centers. He said the whole time his kids were out for Christmas break they wouldn't open it up until 2 or after. He said they get to work at 11 o'clock and say they holding it for grown people. He said when kids are out school and they trying to keep them off the streets the game room should be open. He said the workers are in the game room playing the games and not watching them children. He said why are the workers getting paid to sit there and play games when they suppose to be mentoring the children. He said the recreation centers on the South and the East side need work. He said on the Burg Jone Lane the gentlemen running the recreation center is watching the cameras from his house with his own personal phone and tablet. He said there are kids doing dance practice and dressing out in those rooms with cameras in there. He wanted to know how much power these people really have, and he said they have done wrong so long to they always think they're right.

Ms. Woods thanked Mr. Castor for the information, and she said when we know we do better. She said she definitely will start looking into those things and they appreciate him bringing that to the attention of the Council.

(2) Ms. Karen Jefferson, 418 Reed, said she relocated back from Houston to Monroe, and she renovated her father's home on 418 Reed Street. She said there were some lights out on Reed and Florida she called the Energy company they came right out to fix the lights on the corner.

(3) Mr. Paul Mazant, 2829 Murray Richwood, La, said he rented the Civic Center kitchen on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December but on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December after speaking with Ms. Jackie Brown scheduled him that day who stated he had from 8 to 8. He said he arrived 8 o'clock in the morning and they have carter already in there cooking and they had been cooking since six in the morning. He said he had to wait and didn't get started until 12 o'clock and he said last week he went back to visit Ms. Brown, and he explained it her. He said she said she was sorry about that no one was supposed to be there only him and his staff. He said she said they would not be renting the kitchen anymore and this something that has been going on for a while and he didn't get anything writing. He said he also had a customer go to the Civic Center because they having a program in February and they want to use him as their carter, and she gave them a list that didn't have his name on it. He said he pulled the list that had his name on it when Melissa was there, and Ms. Brown stated maybe it wasn't updated. He said he has a major concern because he is a businessman in Monroe, and he is trying to elevate and in order for him to elevate things have to be fair.

Mr. Muhammad to know if there are year requirements to stay on the list.

Mr. Mazant said he doesn't know because he had an event at the Civic Center in November and the maintenance told him it's a new administration he should make sure his name is on the list. He said that Monday he went into the Civic Center to talk to Ms. Brown, and she said he was on the list.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if he is on the list now.

Mr. Mazant said he doesn't know and that is why he has a concern.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if Mr. Creekbaum know about them allowing people to cook at the Civic Center.

Mr. Creekbaum said he has no idea, and it is his understanding the kitchen is not being rented out to carters.

Mr. Mazant said if that is the case they should have memo stating that it is the new rule.

Mr. McFarland said he thinks it is going to be a serious problem if there is another motive why his name is not on the list.

(4) Mr. Franz Hill, 1700 Auburn Avenue, said each year during black history month the City allow confederate soldiers to march up and down our streets firing off guns and canons. He said they wonder how they let this happen again and again, but it is because they didn't start early enough registering their objection. He said a few started a petition back on December 19<sup>th</sup> asking the City of Monroe to enforce its own ordinances against this kind of behavior along the crowded parade route. He said they had letter sent to each Council person requesting resolutions to enforce their own ordinance and a petition signed by 213 families against this sort of behavior. He said people said do we have to have this display every year when they elected people to represent them, and he doesn't believe the majority of them support this kind of behavior. He wanted to know where the Council members stand on whether confederate need to be marching down our streets as part of the Janus Parade or whatever especially during black history month.

Ms. Woods stated she had extensive conversation with Mr. Creekbaum, and she was actually waiting on some follow up information from Mr. Creekbaum regarding this issue. She said they will talk as soon as Mr. Creekbaum can get with her to her what his finding were because she definitely looked into that.

Mr. Hill said when those people march up and down the street during Black History Month they are celebrating human trafficking. He said he has no issue with them marching up and down the

street with their human trafficking costumes it's there first amendment right to do so but the City ordinance prevents them firing off guns and weapons.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if the guns are loaded.

Mr. Creekbaum said his understanding from the Police Chief there are no bullets or rounds it is only the ignited black powder.

Mr. McFarland said how do they know it won't be loaded.

Mr. Creekbaum said he is sure that it is within the province of the Police Department that they deal with the parade permitting and the regulations that go with that and that would be a question for Chief Victor Zordan or Officer Heckard who deal with parades.

Ms. Woods said she does have concerns especially given the fact what has recently happened in New Orleans, LA. She said she was a student at Southern University when two guys were killed when they were supposed to be firing blanks and just really never know. She said it is those kind of behaviors that do concern her. She stated Louisiana is one of those states that allow people to walk around with a sidearm.

Mr. McFarland said there are laws in the City of Monroe they must follow.

Mr. Creekbaum noted the illegal discharge ordinance on the book says it does not prohibit anything that is allow by State law so if State law permits it that is an exception to the illegal discharge. He said the last session the State legislator passed a comprehensive law preempting a whole lot if not all local regulations of firearms. He further noted it says municipalities are required repeal any ordinances on their books that are in conflict with this new ordinance. He said one of the laws on the book is the reckless discharge of a firearm at a parade and what he has been looking at with Ms. Woods. He said it has in there that this doesn't apply to black powder rifles and can't be convicted of reckless discharge. He said another exception said if is an antique or replica of an antique that is not capable of center fire is also excepted.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know what responsibility does the Krewe of Janus have in this situation because they are allowing them to do this in parade.

Mr. Creekbaum said the City's general parade requirements require them to provide a certificate of insurance to indemnify that City of Monroe for any acts that occur during the parade.

(5) Mr. Curtis Garth, 2300 Georgia Street, said when he heard about the Violent Crime Victims' Rights the deal is when people report something it needs to be investigated and so far those things haven't been done. He said his civil rights are being violated and he sure others civil rights are being violated. He said he is being harassed by the government for no particular reason, he guess. He said he has been trying to get to the Department of Justice to find out what kind of problem the government have with him that he is being barred from different government agencies. He said those crimes he reported he is trying to find out why they are not being investigated. He said he thinks the Department of Justice is over everything but the president and if he can't go there that's a problem. He said he is reporting this to the Council because it needs to be investigated.

(6) Ms. Sandra Carter, 1105 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street, said on the 4<sup>th</sup> of this month, Saturday the City crane truck came by to put up mattresses from an abandoned houses. She said when he pulled off he didn't wait until the hands were down and took the meter base box off her house.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if the crane driver stopped.

Ms. Carter said no, she couldn't stop him.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know if Mr. Louis Tolliver was aware.

Mr. Louis Tolliver, Director of Public Works, said he was not.

Mr. Creekbaum noted Ms. Carter filed a claim with the City and the claim is being adjusted.

Ms. Carter said she was without lights for 3 and half days and she had to get an electrician and paid \$2,400.

Mr. McFarland said he is more than sure Public Works can figure out who was driving on that particular street.

Ms. Woods said when the City's truck took the meter box off the house Ms. Carter called Energy and she wanted to know if she called the City at all.

Ms. Carter said yes, when she kept trying to turn on the microwave the lights were going dim and her friend told her the light cord were hanging on the fence. She said Entergy stated they had to turn her light off because if the lights stay on the house would catch on fire.

Ms. Woods wanted to know if she got in touch with the City the same day this happened.

Ms. Carter said no.

Mr. Muhammad said the driver should have stopped.

Ms. Woods said sometimes they don't know.

Ms. Carter said she has the receipt for the electrician along with her food damage and she is a diabetic. She said Mr. Michael Shore, Insurance adjuster, came out and he had a nasty attitude with her, and he said that this has never happen before. She said she told him it is not going to be the last time. She said Mr. Shore said her lines are to low and it's the light company fault. She said she came to City Hall to speak with Mr. Creekbaum but was told he was in a meeting, and they would relay the message, but she didn't hear from him. She said she is here tonight to see what will be done for the reimbursement of the \$2,400 and lost of her groceries.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if she talked to anyone from the City.

Ms. Carter said nobody but Mr. Shore.

Mr. McFarland said it seems Mr. Creekbaum is aware of this by his earlier statement, and he knew there was a claim.

Mr. Creekbaum said in the claims process Mr. Shore handles 99% of claims. He said he is rarely aware that most claims even exist. He said his understanding on this is Ms. Carter somehow reach out to Chief Bryant and forwarded to him. He said this is the first time he has heard Ms. Carter tried to reach out to him.

Mr. McFarland said the Charter gives the Council the power to have a special investigation. He said they may have to call some special hearings for investigations on certain issues. He said he is not happy tonight about he had been hearing for several issues that have come up. He said the Council has been silent on these special investigations hearings and this is problematic. He said he wish to God Ms. Carter would have called him.

Ms. Carter said she didn't have Mr. McFarland number, and she knows he is busy. She said she called Ms. Marie Brown, and she let her know how to get in touch with someone.

Mr. Muhammad said he thinks the issue is Mr. Tolliver didn't know anything about it from Public Works and Chief Bryant was aware the Council have to at least get a courtesy call to reassure her that they will make it right.

Mr. McFarland said that is very much a problem and the Council received a memo from the Mayor telling them they can't talk with Department heads, which is problematic for him. He said he wish someone would have gave her his number because he would have made enough noise to get something done. He said he knows Mr. Tolliver personally and if he had known about this matter would have been handle quickly.

Ms. Marie Brown said Ms. Carter called her the day of and she gave her Chief Bryant number. She said he spoke with Ms. Carter who said he would speak with Mr. Creekbaum. She said she told her to come to the Council Meeting tonight and before she comes to reach out to Mr. Creekbaum. She said if that communication didn't go it's not her fault she didn't know the people to reach out too. She said she didn't know if she was in Mr. McFarland or Mr. Muhammad district. She said also this problem is happening on Garden Street today with wires hanging and she did report it. She said AT&T are putting lines lower than the power lines and that is something the Council should look into.

Ms. Carter said she also have pictures she shared with Chief Bryant.

Mr. McFarland asked Ms. Carter to share those pictures with him also and he asked Ms. Brown to make sure Ms. Carter has all his information.

Ms. Woods apologized for the delay and for no one getting back with Ms. Carter regarding this issue. She said they will definitely look into it to know what is going on.

Mrs. Ezernack said the big thing is the driver should have reported that, and the ball would have rolled like it should have. She said they can trace down who it was by the date and time.

There being no further business to come before the council, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Ms. Juanita G. Woods

Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley

Council Clerk

Ms. Ileana Murray

Staff Secretary

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.