

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
December 9, 2025
6:00 p.m.

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

The Honorable Rodney McFarland I, Chairman called the meeting to order. He 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 McFarland announced that a quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance would lead by Mr. Harvey or his designee.

Mr. Harvey asked Mr. McFarland to led the Invocation and Pledge.

Rules of the Day: The Chairman welcomed everyone to the City Council meeting and outlined the rules: speakers on action items must use the podium to the right, have three minutes, and cannot return once finished. Citizens on the participation list may speak on any topic respectfully and orderly. Comments on agenda items must be germane to that item. The Chairman asked that order is kept in this chamber if not he will be asking the Marshal to escort you out. He will keep order in this Chamber, he asked that you follow the rules when someone is up speaking, do not interrupt and respect those as they come up to give their remarks.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack, the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of November 25, 2025, were approved. Ms. Woods abstained. (No comments from the public.)

PRESENTATION: Grow Northeast Louisiana (GrowNELA)

Mr. Rob Cleveland, President and CEO came forward to give an update on GrowNELA, an economic development organization representing a 10-county area, anchored by Monroe, Louisiana. They are looking at new business Leads; new investments and some areas of interest are South Monroe Industrial Park and the Charleston Industrial Park. They are also looking at Pharmaceutical Manufacturing opportunities in Monroe. He further noted that the City has been well represented during meetings when questions concerning subject matters of interest were asked and departments answering the questions were ready without hesitation.

PROPOSED CONDEMNATIONS:

1. 403 N 25TH St. (D3) – Owner: Charles Gunn c/o Lavargne Gunn Ford. Photographic evidence was presented. Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the structure. (There were no public comments)

Mr. James, Code Enforcement Officer, noted that there had been no contact with the owner and asked that the property be condemned and given 30 days to demolish.

Ms. Woods noted that she did get a phone call from someone about this property.

Ms. Elizabeth Ford came forward and noted that she has communicated with someone in regard to the property and that she would like more time so that they can have the property demolished.

It was motioned and seconded to begin discussion on this matter.

Ms. Woods asked what they were going to do with this property.

Ms. Ford stated that they are going to tear it down because there is more that needs to be done and with discussion with other family members they came to that decision and they just need an extension.

Ms. Woods explained that the city is not in the business of tearing things down and assessing to taxes. Ms. Woods asked Mr. James to explained the process.

Mr. James explained that if Ms. Ford goes and pulls a demolition permit that would extend her time and she will have an additional 6 months to complete this demolition process.

Ms. Ford said that works for her.

Mr. Creekbaum, City Attorney, recommended that you condemn the property with stipulations that the owner can obtain a demolition permit within the next 30 days, which will give them a 6 month period. If they fail to complete demolition within that 6 month period, the condemnation will proceed.

Ms. Woods restated her motion as stated by the city attorney to condemn the property giving the property owner 30 days to obtain the demolition permit and if the property owner does not comply with the demolition permit the condemnation will proceed and Mr. Harvey seconded the motion.

2. 123 S 21st ST. (D3) – Owner: Wanda F. Rollins. Photographic evidence was presented. There was no one present. Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved, this item was removed from the agenda, the property owner has met compliance. (There were no public comments)

Mr. James stated that this property has been completed by the property owner and he would like to thank them for doing that and this was placed on the agenda so he can thank them for complying.

3. 811 BURROUGHS ST. (D5) – Owner: Kenneth Ray Harris. 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 to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the structure. (There were no public comments)

Mr. James asked that this property be condemned and property owner be given 30 days to bring into compliance.

4. 1101 MAPLEWOOD DR. (D5) – Owner: Joseph and Rubie Montgomery. 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 to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the structure. (There were no public comments)

Mr. James asked that this property be condemned and property owner be given 30 days to bring into compliance.

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

1. Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously consider an Application by Oliver Cory Bahr dba Sushi Koko, 317 North 2nd Street, Monroe LA 71201 for a New 2025 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)

Mr. Harvey thanked Chef Cory Bahr for another investment in downtown Monroe and also the newest member of the Downtown Economic Development District.

Chef Cory Bahr came forward and said that he is super excited about the opportunities the city has provided him with. The staying power is where it's at and they have proved that over the last 25 years of doing this in the city. If you apply yourself and believe and have self confidence in not only yourself but the people you surround yourself with, anything is possible. They are going to

start another project downtown and he really believes in what's happening and the direction the city is going in and they will now be employing over a hundred people. So, without the city's support and growth, the direction it's headed in and with the belief that we're capable of anything if we work together is key. Chef Bahr thanked the council for everything they do.

Mayor Ellis noted that he has known Cory for a long time and that he is a bit of our local celeb, Beat Bobby Flay, Chop 2012, Food One, Best Chef of the South, no formal training just a love for food and culture. He is someone who didn't say Monroe should have, he went out and got it done. He is a true testament of hard work, and he represents Monroe Louisiana on a world stage, he is everywhere and just as humble and a great guy and Mayor Ellis just wanted to let him know that he is proud of him.

Chef Bahr said this is the center of the universe and no matter where he is he meets people directly from Monroe or connected to someone from Monroe and he thinks the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in this community. We just got to believe who we are as a community, you support home and he is proud of where we are headed and he thinks the future is bright.

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to consider ten (10) Renewal Applications for a New 2026 Class A Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no questions or comments.)

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad unanimously approved to consider five (5) Renewal Applications for a New 2026 Class B Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no questions or comments.)

(d) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to consider two (2) Renewal Applications for a New 2026 Class E Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (There were no questions or comments.)

2. Police Department:

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to adopt a Resolution #9054 authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Contract for Detention Services with the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office.

Captain Adams was present for questions.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Ellis asked Mr. Hunt Neely to come forward to honor him for his 25 yearlong service to the City of Monroe through various boards he has served on and ending with the Planning Commission Board and he present him with a proclamation honoring him for his service proclaiming Tuesday, December 9, 2025 as Hunt Neely Day.

Mr. Harvey had no announcement but asked for prayers for the Rodriguez Family.

Mrs. Ezernack welcomed everyone this evening.

Ms. Woods said happy holidays to everyone, and she hoped everyone had an amazing Thanksgiving with plenty to eat and as you prepare to go into this holiday season that we remember the reason for the season. She went on to announce her community meeting Christmas with the Councilwoman at the Powell Community Center, 1401 Powell Avenue, Thursday, December 18 from 10am until Noon. She is inviting everyone to come out and enjoy the festivities, reflect on the reason for the season, and talk about this year what we are wanting and hoping for next year. This isn't replacing the Chat and Chew but they will definitely be chatting and chewing and giving some token of appreciation to show how much you are appreciated.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to offer condolences to Reverend James Johnson a pillar in our community, he was a man who wore many hats. He was the assistant principle at Wossman, and he and his wife founded the Northeast Louisiana African American Museum that is now out at Chennault. He was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, and he was the pastor of Newlight Baptist Church for 35 years. His funeral will be on the 20th of this month. Mr. Muhammad noted that at the next Council Meeting he is going to announce the most festive and decorated yard in district 5. He has seen some nice lights so he will be recognizing one at the next meeting. Mr. Muhammad gave his condolences to Mr. McFarland for the Grambling game loss, and he also wanted to recognized the high school teams that are playing.

Mr. McFarland asked that we continue to pray for the bereaved families. He wanted to remind everyone that the next council meeting will be on Monday, December 22 at 5pm not 6pm. (The Clerk will post notices to this effect.)

CITIZENS PARTICIPATION:

Mr. Derrick Wilkerson, 3009 Gordon Avenue, has a problem with the sewer, and the city came out to unstop his sewer and it has been going on for about 2 or 3 years, and the sewer line is in his driveway. The last time they flushed it out they burst a pipe closer to the road. They said they will have to get the sewer department out to replace it and they came out and moved the sewer hole from in his driveway to closer to the road. From his understanding he was thinking that the sewer department was responsible from the hold to the main flow, but when they flushed it out it busted a pipe here and then moved the sewer hole close to the road and the pipe still busted in his drive. Now they are saying he has to cover this up and replace this pipe that they busted, and they didn't replace his concrete in his drive back to the original condition.

Mr. McFarland asked Mr. Tolliver if he knew anything about this and he said he didn't. Mr. McFarland said he is going to look into this and also said they will come by.

Kim Ross, 1616 Stake Street also 2101 Grammont Street both Monroe Louisiana district 3 came forward and stated that she is here testing the waters this evening. There was a resolution passed last council meeting dealing with naming or renaming the Benny Ausberry and Coach Hughey Community Center. She is asking for that to be revoked and if revoked is it possible to revisit the ordinance that was passed 10 years ago obviously deep down in someone's soul, they haven't moved forward with this because deep down maybe that wasn't the right thing to do. She beseech you to look at it again, look at the history, do your research. They should be separate, they should not be on the same building, this should not be a kill two birds with one stone ordinance. She asked if you can't do that can you change Powell Avenue to Ausberry Way.

Vernon Hall, 1007 Thomas Avenue, came forward about the adjudicated property next door to him he has been taking care of it over the summer and found out there was a spot that stayed wet. He called the mayor's office and Mrs. Essex contacted public works and he talked to engineering and water distribution, and Mr. Tolliver came out after Mrs. Essex contacted him and told him some good things, but he didn't see it. One of the field operators from water distribution came down and told him that this wasn't a city problem, but it's adjudicated property he is in the process of buying and he doesn't know if this is toxic or what. He called again and they said they had more important project than mine and there is nothing more important than his project to him. He talked to Mr. Toliver a minute ago and it sounds good, but he is not seeing any good work.

Mr. McFarland noted that when he leaves Gordan Street he is going to Mr. Hall's house.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, wanted to offer some clarification and he has no idea what particular issues is on this piece of property but it's one that comes up commonly in his office when they get issues related to this. He explained that adjudicated properties are not city owned properties those are properties that someone has not paid the taxes on and the city has the right under the state's adjudication statutes to take ownership of that property if it so chooses to cover the taxes that are owed. The vast majority of instances the city does not take ownership of those properties because the city does not have the ability to maintain them, mow the grass and that would be a very big fiscal burden on the city and the property taxes are what benefits the city. The only time the City takes ownership of adjudicated properties is when someone comes and says they want to buy that property and the city says they will take ownership and you will pay the city back taxes. So, if there is an issue with a sewer or water line on the property that's on the city side it will get addressed. Adjudication is a legal fiction until

the city take ownership and he noted that this may just be a sewer, water issues that is something completely separate and he just wanted to clarify.

Mr. McFarland asked if the paperwork states the city owns the property.

Mr. Hall said this is adjudicated and it says that he is going through the process to purchase it. He doesn't want to purchase a problem he doesn't necessarily need to have because the city paid someone to demo the place.

Mr. McFarland asked the City Attorney to speak with Mr. Hall after the meeting.

Rev. T.J. Stevenson, mayor of Adams Street, came forward in the interest of SEDD and noted they did not have a meeting on the first Monday in this month. She sent an email and a phone call to the gentleman whose acting as the secretary, and she did not get a response. There was no cancellation, rescheduling or anything and they are at a point of losing everything they have because they have not selected officers or done an audit. The deadline for the audit has passed and they are in dire need and may lose state funds and will not be able to pay any bills or receive any money until they can take care of this. She is asking that the council please address this because they are in limbo and if they make it to January 1st, they will not have an organization.

Mr. McFarland asked Mr. Creekbaum, City Attorney, if he was aware of the problem.

Mr. Creekbaum said yes he is in contact with multiple commissioners about this issue and they are addressing it from a legal perspective, allotting them their legal options and what they can do, but some of it is going to be up to the board itself and how it checks out.

Mr. McFarland asked if the board failed to meet, it is going to self-destruct.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that there are penalties for failing to file an audit timely and he will leave it to the city and he try not to share legal advise with other boards, but if the city didn't file it's audit timely the statute prescribe certain penalties one being you become ineligible for state funding, and other funding that may come through the state. So, there are penalties, and whether there is an extension available that is going to be up to SEDD to figure out.

Mr. McFarland asked how many members they need to have a meeting.

Mr. Creekbaum stated under that board's bylaws a special meeting requires seven members to call a meeting, well under their bylaws it can be the chair, vice chair or seven members. The board does not have a chair or vice chair right now, so the only way to call a meeting would be seven members.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know who would call the meeting and what authority does the secretary have since he seems to be the next in line and what is his position.

Mr. Creekbaum stated the next in line in general is not something that is recognized either in their statutes or the bylaws. It just takes seven of them to call a meeting.

Mr. McFarland asked and they don't have seven that is willing to meet.

Rev. Stevenson said no and that they had scheduled a meeting, and the young man whose serving as secretary sent out letter telling commissioners not to come to the meeting, so they didn't have a quorum only 5 people showed up.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that anything held not on a regular meeting date would be by definition a special meeting unless some advance consent by the board to move that date.

Mr. McFarland asked Mr. Creekbaum if he could help them in any way.

Mr. Creekbaum stated he has been on the phone most of the day and he is trying as best he can to help them sort this out.

Mr. McFarland asked him to keep him informed.

Chef Cory Bahr wanted to say that public works have been very helpful to him, and it is a big change from 8 years ago, the last time he did this with the willingness to be helpful.

Mr. Dontario Anderson, 1706 Mcgee Street, came forward to invite everyone out on tomorrow night there will be an unveiling of the new nonprofit organization Streets to Stage, they help the young people here in the great City of Monroe, giving them opportunity to showcase their gifts and talents on a bigger stage. It will mean the world if you all come out to the Courtyard Marriott Conference Room.

Ms. Kenya Roberson, NELA Chamber of Commerce, came forward to announce their annual end of the year event and it will be held on next Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 7pm at the Monroe Civic Center and hopefully they have received their invite, council, and mayor. She noted to Mr. McFarland that she respectfully understands his prior comment. She would appreciate the community coming as well, it's not a party it's an annual State of the Chamber Address and it gives insight on the chamber, what it means to have a chamber, how important it is, what they have done for the year and what the expectations, and calendar looks like for 2026. They will have a live band; they will be honoring the chamber business of the year and nonprofit of the year. There will be a full course meal, but most importantly knowing where the chamber was last year, the growth and what to look forward to for the new year. She thanked the City of Monroe for the partnership and looks forward to it again next year.

ADJOURN.

There being no further business to come before the council, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Mr. Rodney McFarland I
Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

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.