

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
January 13, 2026
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: Mrs. Ezernack, Ms. Woods, Mr. McFarland & Mr. Muhammad

There was absent: Mr. Harvey is running late.

Chairman McFarland announced that a quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance would lead by Ms. Woods or his designee.

Dr. Janet Floyd, Pastor, New Beginning Worship Center led the Invocation and Pledge.

(Councilman Harvey entered the meeting at 6:05pm.)

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. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey, the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of December 22, 2025, were unanimously approved. (No comments from the public.)

V: Presentations:

Audit Review –

Tim Green – Allen, Green & Williamson, LLP – Certified Public Accountants

Mr. Green came forward and stated that they have performed the financial and compliance items for the City of Monroe for the year ending April 30, 2025, which is the presentation he is making tonight. The report is required to be filed with the Legislative Auditor's Office by October 31st or 6 months after year end, that was and approved the first of December after their review. Mr. Green has gone over it with the council members and management and there were two reports issued, one being the annual comprehensive financial report, the financial statements for the City of Monroe. The small report that is the single audit report that delves into mostly the federal programs and also some agreed upon procedures that the Legislative Auditors requires these are what is called best practices and that is included in the smaller report and as noted that he has gone over that with the council. Mr. Green will give a summary tonight and answer any question, he explained that the handout he presented that is front and back states that the audit opinion for the City of Monroe financial statement which is the main thing reviewing your records, testing certain documentations, obtaining confirmation from various sources, getting representation from management and doing certain procedures that are required by professional standards and as a result of all that as far as the financial statements themselves they gave an unmodified opinion or clean opinion. They don't think there are any adjustments that need to be made to define any material adjustments that need to be made to the financial statements that they have stated as presented.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to thank the auditors for briefing the council earlier on what was reported tonight, and she appreciates their time in answering their questions.

Ms. Woods agreed they did a thorough job in briefing them on this and she is interested in making these repeats go away.

Mr. Green said management is working on that and they will sit on the mayor and make sure they get that accomplished before next year.

Mr. Muhammad inquired about the capital projects showing net decrease and he wanted to know if there is a reimbursement due back.

Mr. Green said it may depend on if it is in governmental funds and not collectable within a certain length of time, they may not be recorded at this point. But generally, they do record those if they are collected soon after year end or during the year.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to thank the auditors for clearing up the miss quote of the Ouachita Citizen, also the matter with city court, he wanted to know if that didn't show up as a finding or is it something they should be concerned about.

Mr. Green noted that the courts as part of their audit they include two component units the Monroe City Marshals and Monroe City Court those are audited by other auditors and they had concerns with the Monroe City Court that their revenue had been decreasing and expenses increasing, they issued as part of their report and it is taken and include in our audit report with being identified as being audited by another auditor. It is identified in our report when the city court auditor issued their opinion and questioned whether it could be a growing concern for more than 12 months from the end of this fiscal year. Their auditor had concerns and included it in his opinion that the courts couldn't do that without some major changes. It was put in our report the city as a whole and the courts are a small piece of that so from their views they didn't place as much significant on it, but they are not disagreeing on what he is saying and share that opinion with court auditor.

Mr. Harvey noted that he spoke with Mr. Green a few weeks ago and he appreciated him answering his concerns then.

Mr. McFarland noted that he wanted to piggyback on a couple of things and he wants to thank the auditors for all they do with them and for them. They have their monthly financial meeting, and he is very thorough and gives warnings in advance and he pray they can get these things resolved. In dealing with the miss quote from Ouachita Citizen and he noted that he doesn't think it's a miss quote that they wrote it how they wanted to write it and that is the way he see it and how they try to discredit this new council, but he is glad that he stood tall and corrected what they had put out there.

Mr. Green noted that there was one other item that was reported in the news that he could probably comment on as well as far as the Moccasins. According to the article he read it said that with the Moccasins the City got rental income of 35,000 thousand dollars for the events, which is just one small piece of what was paid to the city. The City also gets 2 dollars for facility charge, 1 dollar for individual tickets for usage fee, they get override fee of 1 dollar per ticket sold in excess of 2700. They get monies from the concession, so 35,000 thousand is the smallest piece that they get and just calculating the small fees it was about 160,000 thousand dollars received by the city for that revenue and you also have the sales tax collection. From the auditor's calculations the City receives a little over 400,000 thousand dollars that was received by the city for rent, sales tax, concessions sales etc. for the city from the Moccasins sales, so the article only report one small component.

Mr. McFarland noted that they probably need to have some more conversations concerning that and what was said because again there are a lot of misquotes out there. He thanked Mr. Green for helping correct that. The matter with the rent with the hockey team, he said he is different on that because what they are paying they still haven't determined that 1 million dollar investment. He said that in the finance meeting Mr. Green verified that he couldn't find the 1 million dollar investment either. He further noted that they had reduced their rent of what they pay the city, so he noted they need to address that issue in the next finance meeting. He noted that he tried to have a meeting with the individuals and the can got kicked down the road because they have to get the mayor's approval for them to meet with him. Mr. McFarland noted that we have to work together to get these questions answered and he thanked Mr. Green for being straightforward in bringing things to their attention. Mr. McFarland said that the other thing is the Monroe City Court and noted that they have to have a meeting of the minds to bring some type of resolution to what's actually and truly going on because they hear a lot out there and if the Monroe City Police Department is writing tickets in the city and citations and having people go to court. He needs some understanding why some are being directed to go to the parish court, if it happened in the city and our police wrote the ticket then it should be coming to Monroe City. Mr. McFarland noted that he need to get to the bottom of this and this is going to be one of his things these last 6 months of his tenure as chairman to get to the bottom of what being told why tickets are being sent to the parish and it should be sent to the Monroe City Court because that is one of our revenue stream that comes from City Court. They want to put a spotlight on Monroe City Court like they're

doing something wrong, they are mismanaging or overspending and that's not the case. Mr. McFarland said he is going to have the internal auditor place on the Finance Committee Agenda things to talk about and this is one of the issues. He is asking the Mayor to please have the police chief attend the finance meeting. If there is any truth to this it needs to be resolved, if infraction happens in the city it needs to go through the city court if our officers wrote those tickets.

Ouachita Green – Update
Sheila Kay Downhour, Executive Director

Mrs. Downhour came forward to say thank you for supporting their work and making the community better Ouachita Green is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit support organization for Keep Ouachita Parish Beautiful, Keep Monroe Beautiful, Keep West Monroe Beautiful and the keep Sterlington Beautiful because when you work together good things happen in the communities. She just wanted to say thanks and show you that you are getting your monies worth. She emailed everyone the annual report, and she just wanted the people in the audience to see on the screen some of the good things that are happening with all of these affiliates. Litter hurts our people, animals, community, our pride and our businesses and they are trying to take care of that. Ouachita Green is dedicated to protecting the environment, preventing blight, leading litter abatement efforts and promoting environmental education. They provide planning for beautification projects, litter abatement, fundraising events and educational initiatives.

VI: RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

1. Council:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9064 appointing Sabrina Hogan to the Board of Commissioners for the Downtown Economic Development District. (No comments from the public.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9065 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin City Art Foundation for an Exhibition Reception and Talk for Invocations: Selections from the Permanent Collection at the Masur Museum of Art pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D (Open Container Ordinance) and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public.)

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9066 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin Cities Krewe of Janus (Mardi Gras Parade) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D (Open Container Ordinance) and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public.)

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9067 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin Cities Krewe of de Riviere (Mardi Gras Parade) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D (Open Container Ordinance) and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public.)

(e) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9068 appointing Kenya Green to the Board of Commissioners for the Downtown Economic Development District. (No comments from the public.)

2. Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to consider three (3) 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.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved to consider one (1) 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. (No comments from the public.)

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved

Resolution No. 9069 approving the assignment of the Water Purchase Contract between the City of Monroe and Town & Country Service Co., Inc. to Magnolia Water Utility Operating Company, LLC. (No comments from the public.)

3. Planning and Urban Dev.

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9070 authorizing an agreement with AHAYAH Community Development Corporation, Inc. (CHDO) for rehabilitation of 2300 Georgia Street. (No comments from the public.)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9071 authorizing an agreement with AHAYAH Community Development Corporation, Inc. (CHDO) for rehabilitation of 3603 Pippin Street. (No comments from the public.)

4. Mayor's Office:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9072 approving a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the City of West Monroe for the 250th Anniversary Fourth of July Celebration. (No comments from the public.)

Mayor Ellis noted that this year is American's 250th year Anniversary and the City of Monroe and West Monroe come together every year and do fireworks but this year they want to give you something different. So, this year they are contracting with a drone company and not only fireworks but a drone show as well and there are other events that are going to be planned. They just wanted to give the community something extra and special for our 250th Birthday here and there, so they are excited to be able to bring this to the public here in northeast Louisiana.

5. Department of Public Works:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9073 accepting the bid of Amethyst Construction, Inc for the Monroe Civic Center Drainage Repairs – south parking lot project and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public.)

6. Engineering Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9074 confirming funding sources for the Georgia Street Pump Station, including generator and auxiliary project. (No comments from the public.)

VII: INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

Public Comment:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance amending Section 30-7 (Sewer Rates) of the City of Monroe Code and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public.)

Ms. Woods noted she had concerns because the CPI did not appear in the ordinance and she asked the city attorney to talk about that and she wanted to know that these amounts that they are proposing are going to be sustainable and sufficient to get out of this and as she said early all of this is repeat on us and it doesn't work with her well.

Mr. Creekbaum, City Attorney said subsection (b) does contain a CPI increase, when sewer and water ordinances were passed in 2016 and 2017 the last time these raters were revisited there were two separate states, one with the new sewer rates and one with the new water rates, both had been ordinances with the CPI increase. After 7 or 8 years until this new council came on, Mr. Muhammad came in with a new water ordinance that ended the CPI increases for water. They did not separately go and do anything with the sewer ordinance. Sewer still has the CPI increase it had so this does not change that, it keeps the CPI increase in place for sewer, but it also brings the sewer rates to where they are in line with the rate study that Mr. McCallister can talk about if you have any questions.

Mr. Muhammad asked if they will still keep that 4% cap and the attorney said yes.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance amending Section 36-23(a) (Water Rates) of the City of Monroe Code and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public.)

Ms. Woods inquired about the water rates.

Mr. Creekbaum explained how the water rates evolved over the last 2 years, so the water rates had the CPI increase and when the new council came in one of the early ordinances approve in September of 2024 Council passed the ordinance ending the automatic increases taking away the CPI adjustment and instituting process by which this council would revisit the water rates each year to determine what the best rates should be. There was another amendment 3 months later that tinkered with that process a little, but substantively now what's written into the ordinance is that you are going to have annual review by the department of administration that recommends a new rate for the upcoming year each year. This council can either accept or reject that recommendation. A couple of council members have spoken to him about why in making these changes a CPI adjustment maybe wasn't included again. Mr. Creekbaum has shared his recommendations that this council continue the annual review process rather than going through an automatic CPI adjustment because the rates were tied to the bond covenant as long as it was operating under the bond covenant. The city has a specific target that it has to hit every year that's based off a mathematical calculation with revenues and expenses, if you put this increase on autopilot and put them in a CPI calculation and if next years expense are going to be abnormally high you will have to replace significant portions of the line or revenue drops for some reason if you all don't take that into account each year when setting the rate then we are going to get out of line with the bond covenant. That CPI increase may not be sufficient to cover those planned expenses, so what was talked about at length was adopt a forward looking approach at how these rates should be looked at and he thinks it a good thing, legally maintaining compliance with the bonds and from an administrative standpoint. When going through the budget process each year they can look at next years projected revenues, expenses, talk to the water department and see if they have any major projects planned, see where they had extra expenses last year as part of preparing the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, then take those numbers and develop the water rate based on spending next year. You can't plan for everything, but what that does is put the City in a much better position to maintain compliance with that bond requirement rather than looking backwards and trying to figure out where we went wrong. Plan ahead basing it off what we are planning to do next year instead of trying to catch up where we went wrong.

Ms. Woods noted this is in line with getting the city now into compliance, so we are not back here next year with a repeat.

Mr. Creekbaum said that is the hope and if they do it this way with the before as the key plan starting next fiscal year. He noted that it is much more likely that we will not have a finding by adopting this approach.

Mr. Harvey wanted to know what would keep you from doing that even if you did have the CPI increases in there.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that it is easy to put up the CPI increases on autopilot and then not review it, that's what happened for many years. You know it's going to increase anyway 2 or 3 percent, but what that didn't capture even in the old ordinance was the council would look at the rates periodically and that didn't happen. What this does is force the Administration to go through that process every year and deliver a report to council that has the information backing the rates being proposed and it really keeps everybody honest and keeps everybody looking at this periodically making sure we are not overestimating or underestimating and you could still have the CPI increase but you are still going to have to look at it every year.

Mr. Harvey noted unless it's an election year.

Ms. Woods noted her question is while it looks like the council has done something wrong or they weren't looking in the reality and scheme of things, it was administration not taking a look to know when the council should have been going and to advise council on what to do.

Mayor Ellis noted if Council would remember last January Administration bought this to Council with a slight increase, then meet the bond coverage, it wasn't completely out of whack, and he thinks this approach is a fair approach. He was talking to Sean, Water Treatment Dir., and he looks at Chlorine as their number one disinfectant and the biggest chemical that they use at the water treatment plant. In 2020 Chlorine was \$530 bucks a unit and now it's over \$1800 bucks a unit, these things we don't know if there is a shortage of chemicals and the price goes through the roof or what's going to happen and still locked in long-term contracts for chemicals. That's how things are quickly changing now.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that as long as a bond covenant is in place it would be his recommendation that they look at this every year. There's nothing that says you can't do some type of CPI base increase or have some type of automatic escalator. This makes the people put pin to paper and look at next year's budget and think about the projects they are going to want done.

Ms. Woods noted that she has visited with our bond attorney, and they are suggesting the same thing that Mr. Creekbaum is, and there has been conversation with us.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that he has talked with Bolds/Shafto Firm, but it has been a while since they have discussed other aspects of it.

Ms. Woods noted that she is in favor of introducing it, but she would like to have some more information on it.

Mr. McFarland noted that for clarification they have to meet that benchmark, the first time that it was not met it was not due to this council, it was the former council.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that there are different aspects to that question.

Mr. McFarland noted but it happened under the old council.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that he will say this, and he thinks this is an accurate summation. CPI increases along are never going to guarantee that you hit the benchmark. There may have been some years where we hit and some years where we did not. The CPI if our revenue were up in a particular year or we had a little capital expenditure and our rate may have been sufficient but there was never a guarantee. There is no guarantee when you are talking about rate setting tied to revenue and expense, it's going to be guess work, but in his opinion CPI adjustments were never along going to guarantee compliance.

Mr. McFarland noted because it is a moving target and that's not how the paper put it out there and they were painting a picture as if this current council was really at fault and that was not factual.

Ms. Woods stated that she would like to go on record saying that it was not our fault, and she thinks it was a combination of faults that rested with city administration and via external auditor. She just doesn't know and she thinks that the calculations were being done properly, and she think had Mr. Muhammad not every asked to remove the CPI piece she thinks they would have still been at fault, and no one would have known it. So, it looks as if the bond rating has been significantly decreased based on what has transpired.

Mr. Harvey noted that if you skip a year it doesn't help, so let's not forget that part happened and then this last recommendation wasn't moved on yet and here is what came next, so let's not pretend like there was a side that was at fault.

Ms. Woods said she thinks there was a combination.

Mr. Harvey noted that if you skip you absolutely will not do it.

Ms. Woods asked will not do what, skipped increasing the rates.

Mr. Harvey said yes, we skipped one.

Mr. Muhammad said that is why we are going to put it back on administration, you all are going to calculate it and bring it to the council.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that's Mr. Harvey's point when there was something brought in January of last year that was rejected by this council, so there was no increase.

Ms. Woods asked so they didn't have any increase last year.

Mr. Creekbaum said no.

Mr. McFarland noted that last year we didn't have an increase but there were questions asked with the rate that we had at that time would that be suffice. There was no negative to that, what is the max amount, is it 4.

Mr. Creekbaum said in the current ordinance as was tweaked a little there is a 4% cap on the increase in any given year except if it's necessary to meet some legal obligation or statutory requirement. The water rate that is being proposed right now exceeds the 4% cap, close to 9.96%, but this would be one of those situations where we are trying to comply.

Mr. Harvey noted that if you don't skip a year, you go 4% and then 4%, that is 8% and now you are doing 9 and literally we are just making up the year within a percent of what we didn't do back in 2024.

Mrs. Ezernack noted that the other thing is looking it over annually to come up with that proposed rate. It's going to help everybody because we all are going to be able to say this is exactly what it's costing us, this is what we need to do, and this is how we meet that obligation that we have because of the bond. Saying who's at fault or not that is a moot point and let's just fix it where we won't be in this position ever again and looking at it on an annual basis is the way to do it.

Ms. Woods noted that she totally agrees, because it's not going to change a thing. She also thinks, let's get it right and based on your recommendation and next year she will not be a happy camper if we are back with a repeat. Mr. Creekbaum said he will not either.

Mr. McFarland explained to the council members with all fairness and understanding that although Mr. Creekbaum has worked on these numbers for us, we are dealing with a moving target, you have to understand that so it's not that Mr. Creekbaum didn't factor correctly, the target keeps moving. Mr. McFarland noted that he is going to be okay with it because he knows that they are trying to do their best and they are going up because if they don't, a lot of things are going to happen. They know they are doing the best they can and with the rate that has been proposed he believes it's a good rate, but he will not fault Mr. Creekbaum if the mark is missed because he understands it's a moving target.

Mr. Creekbaum explains that they prepare the budget each year, there is a process that the administration goes through with the budget and while council sees the budget, gets delivered at the end of January. The departments/divisions start submitting their budget to the budget administrator back in October. The water system, which is water distribution, water treatment and utilities submit their budget back in October so the administration can start reviewing them, so those are real numbers, they have projected revenues, they've identified capital projects, wages, salaries and the expenses. So, we can take their projected budgets, take those numbers plug them all in and what they expect to spend and make next year, put it into the formula that the bond covenant requires and that is what generated the rate. These are actually driven by the people who are managing and operating this system or in charge of making sure we deliver clean safe healthy water. So, moving forward we think this is a really good approach. He further noted that he is not a bond attorney, he doesn't know how this will impact the bond rating and if any input that the bond attorneys will have that will help to improve that and his job is to make sure that next year this thing complies with this covenant and we don't have a finding again.

Ms. Woods noted that if they have bond attorneys on payroll they should be in the conversation.

Mrs. Ezernack noted that the other thing to remember is our obligation is to pay the bonds but also to adhere to the covenants of the bonds which we are not obviously. She thinks what Mr. Creekbaum has proposed will get them there.

Mr. McFarland noted and they have never missed a payment.

Mr. Creekbaum said that is correct.

Mr. McFarland said and that is what nobody is saying, although we may have this finding, they have never missed a payment, again, it's a moving target and they may not make it next year but at least they put their best foot forward.

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance amending Section 16-20 (Refuse Collection Charges) of the City of Monroe Code and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Woods wanted someone to come up and talk to the council about this, she would like to see what the benefit is that's going along with this increase.

The Chairman had closed the citizen comments, but he allowed it this time.

Mr. Bryant Whittington with Waste Connection, 3109 Claiborne Circle, Monroe came forward and noted that they were one of the companies that submitted a RFP when the City thought about going to privatization. They held 5 to 6 public meetings, and he attended 3 and they were very transparent and a lot of comments and it was discussed that the city needs more revenue to be able to service the constituents and the option was to privatize with a little increase or keep doing the trash in house with a little larger increase. This was said in every meeting and the overwhelming comments and support from the public was to continue doing this and to accept the larger increase. He said through his experience with trash/garbage the cost of a garbage truck over the last 22 years has gone from \$180,000 on average to half million. We talked about how we pay our employees \$21, \$22 to \$24 dollars an hour to do that and you need more money and we should take care of our collectors, they do an amazing job. He has never had an issue they are great people and this needs to happen.

Mayor Ellis commended the gentleman that came to the stand, he lost money for not getting this contract and he stood up here and said it's what's right. In those meetings he heard the public clearly saying they want to keep it in house, and they would be willing to pay. He agrees with the council that these aren't easy conversations to have, and you see 3 items tonight that they took head on in their community. You want to talk about the situation we are in nobody wants to talk about increasing rates because it is not popular. They are not doing the popular thing they are doing, what's right and he wanted to commend the council for taking this issue on, it's a big deal. Insurance constantly increasing and it is tough to keep labor when the private sector is out there competing, but they get to charge what they need to charge and we have to go through this process to increase your rates and if you look at it comparatively at some of the charts in the back you will see we are paying way under our piers around the state even across the river and Sterlington. They do a wonderful job and been doing a lot less and they have a great attitude doing it and the cost to operate is higher but yet we have not kept in line with the rate it takes to beat businesses. We want to get our rates in line to pay our employees and that came through discussions with division and department heads to tell us what's complete. Our goal is for the public to see the difference in the delivery of service and that's what these rates have been based on.

Ms. Woods noted that what she really wanted to hear was the cost benefit analysis, we are going up on the rates, but what are the benefits that the constituents will see. Mrs. Roshonda Gospel said look if you all want us to keep this and we go up on the rates it is going to be these kinds of things an increase in pay for our workers, new trucks and when they were having these meeting and that was being said those were the kinds of benefits the constituents took under consideration and they said okay and they were okay with an increase in cost. She wanted to know what are we talking about.

Mr. Louis Tolliver, Public Works Director, stated that is actually what happened and he has no idea how these guys make this work every day and they make it look easy, but it is a fight every morning, you never know who is going to show up, you never know what trucks are going to be running. He has 3 trucks down right now, but they are still running the routes like they normally do and it might take them to about 7 or 8 pm some evenings but they are still making it happen. This is the stuff that the people don't know and if these rates are going to help us get the trucks

that we need, the people that we need so we can do this in a timely fashion and get it done like it's supposed to be done. We are spending all this money in overtime but it still getting picked up like it is supposed to be because we have to make it happen.

Ms. Woods wanted to know how many proposed new trucks they will get with this increase.

Mr. Tolliver said 4 at first but they need 7.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that these are some of the things that have been discussed is looking at a fully least model where you can get a 3 year turnover on trucks, which is kind of their useful life. The administration is working out the prices; you got 8 aged garbage trucks 7 trash trucks to see what it would look like and how many trucks we can get with this increase. Mr. Tolliver is correct they were looking for 4 prior to this increase in the next budget to see how they can make that work, but with increase they may be able to obtain substantially more than 4. The exact figures he don't know right now, the hope would be an entirely new fleet if we can.

Ms. Woods wanted to know how many in the fleet.

Mr. Creekbaum said 15, a significant portion of that would be put toward getting the most modern fleet, part of this increase is the aging fleet, the aging operations, the maintenance cost that go into that and you are already doing short-term leases to fill those gaps when you can get a better rate by doing 3 year lease on some of these. The hope is as quickly as possible to get a complete new fleet with this increase as long as the numbers workout and also to support what Mr. Tolliver is saying giving wage increase to the driver, hoppers, laborers who work on these vehicles directly and increasing those wages to a competitive rate that will encourage people to become city employees and not rely on temporary labor. He checked with Mrs. Gospel last week there are still 35 positions in that division with only 14 positions filled by full time employees, but one of the factors we know is competitive wage.

Further discussion followed concerning positions being made permanent.

The Chairman noted that the only thing that has not been negotiated is the landfill and the city attorney said once this passes, they will know what they are working with and they will be putting out a RFP shortly for landfill. The Chairman said to Ms. Woods that the landfill is now going to be the moving target, but he hopes they can get a good rate.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to say after all the meetings with trash and garbage and running a million dollar deficient for several years this council agreed to explore the possibility, and he wanted to thank the gentleman with Waste Connection for coming to the table and giving them some options. After the community meetings the people said keep it, Monroe is different, unique and other city contract garbage out, but we heard you and you said you would pay an increase. With the increase it would generate 3 to 6 million dollars, so added increase and what you will be paying citizens of Monroe will help buy the trucks, improve the fleet and then offer pay raises and they will be able to structure trash. The other problem we have is trash, there is a lot of trash on the streets, and we just pick it up and don't charge nobody anything.

Mr. Creekbaum explained regarding the financial impact they also made some structural changes to this ordinance as well and one to address the very thing you are talking about now. We didn't have any provisions as to what happens if we have to go out and pick up those things and they have now designated in the ordinance something called Extra Service, Public Works is authorized, not required to perform one-off services, picking up certain things and there are still some prohibited items such as hazardous stuff like that, authorized to but you are going to get a bill for that service at the actual cost, we have a rate schedule we are going to show up and this is what it cost for us to remove and they are going to get a bill directly for the cost of that service tacked on to your bill so the free ride on some of those things should be short live.

Mr. McFarland noted that they talked about that in some of their meetings that they were going to have to do that.

Mr. Muhammad noted that they want to be able to show with the increase what they are doing with the money, fleet of truck, maintenance on the trucks, accommodate fuel and employee. He wants to commend the guys because every Thursday his trash gets picked up, you don't know what they

are dealing with as Mr. Tolliver said when they get to work, they don't know who is going to show up. But he knows at the end of the day trash gets picked up like clockwork, so Mr. Muhammad said they heard you and they are going to keep it in house, they are going to strengthen it and they are going to move forward and it is going to generate revenue for the city so they can do other things too by enhancing and improving the operation of the city.

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

Chairman noted: Mrs. Ezernack is reusing herself from items (a) & (b) under this section.

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

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,281 declaring a 0.451 acre tract of land in the Garrett Road Economic Development area no longer necessary for public use, revoking any dedications, and authorizing said property to be sold at private sale to Remington Monroe Corporation and further providing with respect thereto. (Mrs. Ezernack recused herself from voting on this item.) (No comments from the public.)

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

(b) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,282 revoking any and all dedications within a 70' x 305.55' reserved strip located in the Garrett Road Economic Development area. (Mrs. Ezernack recused herself from voting on this item.) (No comments from the public.)

The Chairman noted that he prays and hope that the final adoption of those items on next meeting will go as smooth as that and he pray that all questions have been asked and you have gotten your answers so we can move through them on next week. Again, on next week the public will have an opportunity when we go into a public hearing to ask any questions and he asks the mayor that those department heads will be here to address the public if they have any other questions on these items the council will be taking up. He wants to commend those department heads and everybody that has worked hard on putting these rates increases together. He thanked Mr. Creekbaum for getting this done.

IX: COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Ellis asked Ellen Hill, PUD Director, to come forward and share with the council and the public about the City Start Initiative and the great things they are doing. The City Start Financial Empowerment Summit January 24, 2026, from 10am until 1pm at the Benoit Community Center. For information contact Community Development at 3189-329-2256. (FREE)

Ms. Woods wanted to say Happy New Year and, on last time she had Elves that went through the city looking for houses or places in District 3 and they have a winner, Joe and Sandy Greely. Holiday lights showing on the screen. The Greely had an emergency so they can't make it tonight and they will receive a \$50 dollar gift card. Ms. Woods thanked the City of Monroe for getting together and making their homes beautiful and the Elf will be back next year. Also, in recognition of MLK, Day of Service and honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, they are going to have a fun filled community day at the Powell Community Center on January 19, 2026, at 12pm until 4pm.

Mr. Muhammad invited everyone out to several MLK events one Thursday 10am at the civic center, and Mayor Ellis said the guest Speaker is Kimberly Dowdell, first black female president of the Americas Institute of the Architecture. We were happy to have her, and she was excited to be a part of this. Mr. Muhammad said the other event is Saturday, the parade, at 10am and a program Sunday afternoon at Olive Branch Baptist Church. Monday night there is a program at Mount Olivet Baptist Church honoring Dr. Martin Luther King. Also, he wanted to say Happy Founders Day to the Ladies of Delta Sigma Theta. He further noted that you are going to start seeing Winnsboro Road and part of South 2nd will come down to one lane with a turning lane getting ready to overlay it and on Jackson Street. They will be repaving from Richwood Road to Jackson on up to Interstate 20. Mr. Muhammad asked Mr. Tommy Elmore to come forward and tell us what he is doing. Mr. Elmore is the president of Elmore Family Foundation, and they are committed to strengthening Monroe and much of what they do is community

services and one in particular is mentoring program. He has with him Draylan Wilson and he met him 2 months ago in the barbershop reading a book on Psychology and part of the Mentoring Program they teach young men and ladies as well how to change flat tires, financial literacy, career development and a wide range of topics. He thought it was important that we get our young people involved at an early age on how government works, with the hopes that our children will learn more and have their minds expanded so they can become effective leaders for next generation. Draylan Wilson, goes to Wossman High School, he is in the 10th grade and he's not sure, yet what he is going to do in the future, and his mother is Shelia Williams.

Pictures were taken.

Mr. McFarland, Mr. Harvey and Mrs. Ezernack had no announcements.

X: CITIZENS PARTICIPATION:

Coach Detrick Massey, 1900 Hickey Street, came forward to announce that she will be hosting the Jr. Olympics and right now she has a total of 2,000 kids and she will be hosting a track meet on June 19-21st at ULM and she would like to have the support of the city and the community. This year her kids will be going to California.

Ms. Johnnie Thomas, 414 South 8th Street, came forward to report a safety hazard at the corner of South 9th and Louis-Anne Avenue at Hester's Funeral Home. There is a big plate that is covering that hole and that plate has shifted the barrels are down so this needs to be fixed asap. Also, with all this paving let's not forget about the Texas Avenue overhead and she knows the state is working on it she has heard that for some year and she is just waiting on it.

XI: ADJOURN.

There being no further business to come before the council, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:09 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.