

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
February 10, 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.

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.

Reverend John Tellis, Senior Pastor, St. Paul and St. James United Methodist Churches 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 Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad, the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of January 13, 2026, were unanimously approved. (No comments from the public.)

V: Presentations: Donterrio Anderson, President and Board Members - Streets2Stage Academy (non-profit organization) Amina Woodard, a representative of Streets2Stage came forward to speak on this organization's work and that they are seeking a partnership with the City of Monroe and Community Leaders to expand youth programming and strengthen community engagement. Streets2Stage Academy is a youth development and performing arts program based in Monroe. They exist to empower youth through structure, discipline, mentorship and creative expression. They support the city's goals by helping reduce juvenile crime and negative peer influence, truancy and lack of afterschool structure, youth violence and behavioral issues, hopelessness and lack of direction, and limited access to mentorship and leadership development. They believe when youth have purpose, they stop looking for trouble.

VI: RESOLUTIONS:

1. Mayor's Office:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9075 ratifying and approving agreements executed by the mayor with Tetra Tech, Inc. and Southern Disaster Recovery, LLC for emergency debris monitoring services and emergency debris removal, hauling, disposal, and right-of-way clearing/tree cutting services related to Winter Storm Fern and further providing with respect thereto.

Mayor Ellis thanked the City Council for their work in helping to get through this and making this decision to move forward tonight. He also thanked the team of people that put this RFP together, it was not a short task. He wanted to give the legal team a pat on the back their RFP is being used around North Louisiana as a great example of what quality RFP looks like once it's put out. The work done has been able to help smaller communities that don't have the compacity like Monroe does with its attorney and their team and everybody who has had input. What's on the streets now is double what they collect for Hurricane Laura when it passed through. There are lots of debris out there and from the latest total from public work who have collected 150 tons in the last week, so they are moving. Whereas one truck would normally service multiple houses on a run, now sometimes a truck will take 2 to 3 loads to service one house and that's how much debris is out there. With it means we will have to stay in compliance and find a monitor firm that we can have this reimbursed through FEMA. The Mayor thanked the council for their consideration of this item.

Mr. McFarland noted that before he receives a motion from the council, he asked has this contract already been executed and all the council is doing is ratifying it.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, said that is correct and explained that the contract was executed on Friday, we are operating under an emergency declaration still at this time and so the mayor went ahead and proceeded with the execution of the contract, and this is ratification, but the contractors are staged which is part of their staging process.

Mr. Don Hopkins, 2955 Chester St., wanted to know what public works is doing and this is their job, he hasn't seen anything to cause the City to go out and get all these private companies to do this job. There have been bigger disasters in the City, and the public works department has always did it without anybody's help. This is taxpayers money that you are using, he noted that you don't need a public works department if you have to do this every time. You are duplicating jobs and you have all kinds of equipment to do this, but nobody is asking any questions. Mr. Hopkins said he is totally against this.

Ms. Kenya Roberson 116 Glenwood Dr. wanted to know if reimbursement would not be given if public works was offered overtime or additional hours and if that is an option if there is the manpower to do so. What is the possible subcontracting work for some of our businesses here who are local and if this is passed, if there is a list of subcontractors that could assist with some of the work being that they are local.

Mr. McFarland noted that he and Mr. Muhammad visited with the Mayor about that and they were reassured that would happen.

Mr. Creekbaum stated that he knew some of the concerns when he sat down with the contractors they included provisions that if any portion of the work is subcontracted that preference must be given to people in Ouachita Parish first and second the region assuming all things remain equal price and things like the ability to provide service.

Mr. Tolliver, Public Works Director, was asked by the Chairman to come forward to address the issue that the city has the capability of doing this whole job. He noted if it was left up to public works it would take 6 to 8 months to get it done, they just don't have the manpower nor the equipment to do the job.

Mayor Ellis explained that was part of the discussion and the cost for public works to do it, previous storms that were done inhouse with the abuse to the equipment and this equipment is not cheap. The cost 15 years ago has doubled for this same equipment. The constituents want it picked up quickly and if you look at the equipment they have verses what we have it's night and day capability as to what they are able to do compared to public works.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know if our employee will take part in this clean up and get overtime and Mr. Tollier said yes.

Mrs. Ezernack expressed that the main thing is the outside company along with our loyal employees and noted that the employees also have their daily jobs to perform.

Further discussion followed concerning categories A and B and Ms. Woods wanting clarification and explained by Mr. Creekbaum, which the city is already approved for B which is immediate response, emergency operations that is within the first week of storm response and that's overtime for employees and a whole list of defined items for the emergency. Category A is the public assistance category that is the full scale of everything to do with the disaster and recovery related to it. Also, debris on private property and help through the City's CDBG program with the Planning and Urban Development Department Ellen Hill. The concern of the use of our local companies, the city's manpower as mentioned by Mr. Hopkins all these questions were asked by the council as noted by Mr. Muhammad as well as public right of ways down to where to start cleanup. All districts will have trucks working each day.

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

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing: (Amend Sewer Rates)

Mr. Cliff Thomas, 500 Hudson Lane came forward and expressed his concerns about what consideration is in place for the seniors.

Mr. Creekbaum explained there was a lifeline rate provision in the ordinances and the eligibility is you are 62 years of age or older, you are permanently disabled under the social security administration or meeting the income limit set by HUD concerning eligibility for HUD assisted housing program you meet these two criteria you are eligible for those rates. For trash there is a tier rate for that as well.

Mr. Thomas wanted to know how it was going to affect seniors and what percent they can expect to have as an increase in those services.

The city attorney said he would look that up for him and get it to him.

Seeing no one else come forward the Hearing was closed.

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,283 amending Section 30-7 (Sewer Rates) of the City of Monroe Code and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Cliff Thomas thinks it's very important that they have in the consideration of passing these rates how it's going to affect our seniors.

Mr. Creekbaum stated that the increase for the sewer rate is roughly 45%, which goes from \$4.34 per thousand gallons to \$6.29 per thousand gallons.

Mr. McCallister, City Engineer, explained that he has worked with our professional service provider FG Solutions to get these rates down as much as we can and we feel this is a good rate, great structure, so roughly 45% increase year one and follow in based on the ordinance in front of you

Mayor Ellis noted that the City of Monroe has the lowest rates anywhere, rates throughout the state even our neighbors across the river including this rate we are substantially lower than anyone else in the state and this is our opportunity to right the ship across the board. These are enterprise funds, so they need to be able to operate as enterprise funds.

Mr. McFarland noted that they want to be above board and make sure nothing comes back later and bite us.

Mr. Creekbaum stated this increase will be done this year for sewer and then there is a built in CPI increase which has been in effect since 2016 with respect to sewer and this will adjust with CPI each year unless council wants to come in and do something different then this will be something that will adjust itself moving forward yearly that was already in there since 2016.

Mr. McFarland noted so this is nothing new and that is what he wants to put on the record because we got those trying to say we're trying to slip something in and it was already there since 2016 and it's not to exceed and there is a cap on it.

Further discussion followed on Enterprise Funds which generate revenue and the sewer metric can't be measured like water, and you have to apply to get senior rates and lifelines. After Covid everything went up, A1 water treatment plant and a lot was taken into consideration to keep it where it is and keep trash and garbage inhouse.

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing: (Amend Water Rates)

Mr. Cliff Thomas, 500 Hudson Lane stated this is a sad night for the seniors in the City of Monroe and he is not against the water increases and he understands all increases and that we are way behind for collecting anything because there was a halt on it to see what needed to be done concerning these rates but, again he expressed his concerns about what affects the increase will have on the seniors.

Seeing no one else come forward the Hearing was closed.

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,284 amending Section 36-23(a) (Water Rates) of the City of Monroe Code and further providing with respect thereto. (No comment from the public.)

Mrs. Ezernack asked if it was too late to put the same CPI in the water as it is in the sewer.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that water rates are tied to bonds, and he recommend no CPI for the water because with your contractual obligation that CPI increase alone would be insufficient to make sure you are meeting those obligations.

Mr. Muhammad asked Mr. Creekbaum about those that buy water from the city and those businesses that get water from us as well and to talk about that percentage because we had to adjust that for those who buy water from the City of Monroe.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that they have different rates depending on where you are located and the city does serve people who are outside the city limits of the City of Monroe. Those individuals and businesses outside pay 150% of the rate than our residents and businesses within the city pay. There are also several bulk water contracts that we supply water to like Graphic Packaging, portion of the Town of Sterlington, portions of Town & Country those are bulk water agreements with 10 or 20 year terms on them and as they come due and they have to be renegotiated this council will set the rates desired. Most of them are in the 125-150 percent of the rate than our residents pay.

Ms. Woods spoke to a statement that Pastor Thomas made because he said that it was a sad day for the seniors in this city and in order to keep up with the changing times and keep up with making sure the residents have the best possible utilities that the City can provide. To say that 45% increase and go back and look at this where we need to be proactive is we need to talk to our seniors 62 and over because it doesn't have to be 45% and a large percentage of our residents do not know that they have this lifeline that is a benefit to them. We should busy ourselves as leaders in this community in making sure that seniors sign up for this lifeline and help them however we can to apply.

Mayor Ellis spoke on how important it is that we meet our bond covenant, if we don't, we will have a decreased credit rating which means it will cost us more money to do business. If we sell bonds at a decreased rating that means more of your tax dollars are going somewhere else other than them on the streets.

Mr. McFarland noted that although rates are going up it doesn't mean we are going to meet our mark and that needs to be said. We may have a finding again in the next audit, so he don't want anyone leaving here with false hopes that it's going to fix the problem because it may not. We may miss the mark because it's a moving target, so we need to be transparent about it so when we come back and have to discuss this again and we didn't meet the goal we should have everybody understand now that it was a moving target.

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing: (Amend Refuse Collection Charges)

Mr. Don Hopkin, 2955 Chester Street, noted that he was glad that the clarification was made that the trash and garbage was not an enterprise fund, it is a service. You are saying the increases will be for vehicles, raises for employees but all that should come through sales tax, it's not an enterprise fund so he doesn't understand what they are talking about on garbage and trash. The incentive for raises that is a question that the union should be asking and as a former employee of the city how is that going to be done to buy equipment with that increase and is that what the city is looking to do because he doesn't see it. Mr. Hopkin congratulated Mr. Moore.

Mr. Cliff Thomas, 500 Hudson Lane came forward for transparency and to make a statement for the record as it relates to these rates, saying they won't change automatically, council will have a chance to review them at the end of the year and if some money has been in the positive and you can look at changing the rates and that the council can look at that. He want you to understand that with all things it has to be changed by ordinance and if it's not specifically in this particular ordinance if you guys look at it in December and say we made a little more money let's back off of that and you propose a decrease and the mayor vetoes that ordinance, you need 4 votes to override and the administration say you all are moving to fast we still need that money and you have to have at least a surplus to cover emergency or whatever so we will let that increase stay in place that kills any authority the council has as far as making any kind of adjustment.

Mr. McFarland stated that some things a smart and intelligent mayor would not veto because with the power of the council you won't get nothing else passed. He hears what he is saying, and the mayor and the council have to pick their battles and you have to know which ones to pick and leave alone.

Seeing no one else come forward the Hearing was closed.

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,285 amending Section 16-20 (Refuse Collection Charges) of the City of Monroe Code and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public.)

Mr. Muhammad just wanted to say on trash and garbage they heard the community loudly they want to keep it inhouse and at his community meetings they were okay with the adjustments in the rate.

Ms. Woods noted it was talked about keeping this service inhouse, the increase, potential raises for employees and what are those numbers.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that he is going to answer this to the best of his knowledge and Mr. Hopkins question as to the guarantee the money is used for this. The budget includes exactly what the mayor says it is going to be used for. There is an increase for equipment to purchase new trucks-fleets, knuckle booms and loaders for trash and money budgeted for raises that this money will be used for.

Ms. Woods noted that all these increases they have been talking about lumped together totaling twenty something dollars and she doesn't want the residents to think they are going to have a twenty dollar increase in just their sewer rates. What about the seniors.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that it's roughly 25 to 26 dollars a month combined not individually with these three services. The seniors, as it pertains to trash those rates are going from the lowest rate that they have is going from 6 dollars to 13 for trash and there are four types of rates and at the second lowest rate for the seniors was at 11 dollars and it's going from 11 dollars to 18.

Mayor Ellis noted that he agrees with Councilman Muhammad in that the community came out and made it very clear that they wanted to keep trash inhouse. The community came out and defended our folks who collect their trash and talked about the wonderful job they do.

Mr. McFarland wanted to say that the southside had their community meetings in two different segments and at every meeting it was the same, they wanted to keep the services. They did agree and he didn't remember anyone disagreeing about the increase. They all agree that we must have an increase.

Mr. Creekbaum had one correction it was a 3 dollar raise not 4 dollars for some public works departments.

Mr. McFarland noted it is there in the budget and we will go into budget meetings on the first week of March and air out other concerns but it's there and that's how we know it's going to happen. Trust this process because we have eyes on this and they are going to be fighting hard that everything is in that budget, whatever we pass is going to happen because you have a council that is going to hold the administration accountable. Mr. McFarland asked Mr. Creekbaum for the record when was the last time there was an increase and Mr. Creekbaum said trash and garbage was 2004. The people have spoken and it's time to move on, the chairman called for the vote.

Ms. Woods and Mr. Muhammad thanked them for all they do for us and with us.

VIII: RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

2. Department of Community Affairs:

(b) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9076 authorizing a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Free Me Association d/b/a Monroe City Academy League (MCAL).

Jessica Hollands, 2415 Grammont Street, came forward representing Free Me Association, City Academy League and they do have a presentation but first they want to say thank you for helping them provide a safe place for the youth to express themselves developmentally, physically and emotionally. They are going on 5 years with our partnership, and it is going well and growing. These slides show how many kids we serviced over the last 2 years. We have 1,184 students that we served just in 2025, and it does not include the schools team and auxiliaries that enjoy what we have to offer. The budget is about 165,000 a year that you help us pay for uniforms, police and game officials and you help with about 40% of that budget and the other things we have to provide is equipment, facilities, insurance and staff of their program

and thanked the Council and the City of Monroe for their support. This has become a true partnership, and they wanted to show a few pictures of game days, and some council members do come, Ms. Woods comes often. The center we use Benoit, Saul Adler, Powell, Johnson and Emily P. Robinson and also showing are the kids and parents and athletes that come out. The soccer program is really expanding bring a lot of different ethnicity and demographic to the Benoit Community Center on Saturday mornings in the Summer and it is truly, truly a great environment.

3. Department of Public Works:

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9081 accepting the quote of Anding Construction Services, LLC for the Powell Ave. at Byers St. Drainage Repair Project.

4. Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved an application by SLHLA, LLC dba Seafood Shack, 2217 Forsythe Avenue, Monroe LA 71201 for a New 2026 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)

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved an application by Daily Press, LLC dba Daily Press, 2899 Sterlington Road, Monroe LA 71203 for a New 2026 Class B Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved. (Distance Report Cleared, Cert. of Occupy Cleared)

(c) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to one (1) 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.

(d) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to one (1) Renewal applications for a New 2026 Class G Alcoholic Beverage Permit. The Monroe Police Department has no disqualifying records and Sales Tax has been approved.

(e) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9077 accepting the quote of NELA Roofing for the City Court Roof Repair Project.

5. Engineering Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9078 approving Closeout Change Order No. 1 for the Sunset Drive Water Distribution Improvements Project.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9079 accepting the work done by Jabar Corporation for the Sunset Drive Water Distribution Improvements Project as substantially complete and further providing with respect thereto.

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9080 Adopt a Resolution approving Task Order 25sew006 with Waggoner Engineering, Inc., for the Sewer Basin Modeling Project.

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9082 approving Change Order No. 1 for the DeSiard St. Improvements (S. Grand St. to N. 6th St.) Phase I Project.

Mr. McFarland noted that the board has complied with his requests.

(e) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9083 accepting the bid of Don M. Barron Contractor, Inc for the Water System Improvements – Thomas Ave. / Georgia St. Intersection Project and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Muhammad note that the residents will start seeing movement in the area on this project.

6. Council:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9084 confirming the appointment of Richard Moore as Director of Administration for the City of Monroe.

Mayor Ellis congratulated and thanked Richard and noted that his wife is here.

Mr. Moore thanked the Mayor for appointing him and he thanked the Council for confirming him and he looks forward to continue working with them.

IX: INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of and sell to Timothy D. Jenkins, all rights, title, and interest that the city may have acquired in 806 Louise Anne Ave., Monroe, La, by Adjudication at tax sale dated July 19th 2001, and further providing with respect thereto.

X: COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mrs. Ezernack congratulated Mr. Moore and also to Mr. McCallister in his new position and she knows he will do well in that, and he has done an outstanding job as the city engineer; he carries that passion to the new office as well. Mrs. Ezernack had a constituent call her to thank her about the sanitation and garbage and trash people and what they had done for her. She had assistance needed on her trash can and they had picked up all around it where an animal had gotten into the trash. Also, she wanted to take a person privilege to thank someone that does so much for us every day in this job and that's Ms. Riley, our council clerk, she is outstanding. I don't think any of us can do it without her in her expertise especially these last few weeks when she is working from home. She keeps us on tract and I thank her very, very much. Mrs. Ezernack noted she has said many times she couldn't do this with her, so we appreciate Ms. Riley very much. And sadly, she wanted to give condolences to Yolanda Washington, our Internal Auditor, her mother passed Letha Davis, and her visitation is Friday and services on Saturday, please keep her family in thoughts and prayers. I never met her mom, but I know it's a tough loss.

Ms. Woods dittoed what Mrs. Ezernack just said concerning Ms. Riley. In January she did something for the first time in her district, it was Honoring the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a day of fun for the community. It was so fun and there are a lot of people to thank for that, and she is going to do it again next time. Now that storm was hideous, she had not seen anything like it before, and she wanted to say thank you to Amanda Edge and thanked Entergy for doing an amazing job. We need to look at the infrastructure and find those grids and see if we can bring them in closer. Thank you, public works, Entergy, community affairs and City of Monroe. Thank you, Captain Avery who fed a couple hundred to three hundred people at Monroe Housing Authority, because they were without power for an extended period of time. Thank you, the World Central Kitchen came in and fed a couple of thousand people over, two and three days and she thanked Sherry Foe, her assistant, she found them and she didn't know how she found them, So thank you for being a community and coming together.

Mr. Muhammad – Vice-Chairman thanked Pastor Tellis for staying through the whole council meeting. He thanked Mayor Ellis and his administration for pulling together during this storm. Council members want to thank you for communicating throughout this storm. He thanked Sean Benton for keeping council updated on the water situation and employees at the water plant, Mr. McCallister, Ms. Thaxton at Marbles Recreation Center keeping it going for people that were displaced and Mr. Tolliver, Mr. DeTiege and all of public works. Thank you to the first responder, elected official who all came together to communicate what was going on with the power. He wanted to thank Mr. Aaron Richards, with Samaritan Purse who came forward.

Mr. Aaron Richard, Samaritan Purse from Wilkesboro North Carolina we are here servicing Richland and Ouachita Parish and as of today they have 1,569 work orders in request for assistance. They do tree work and help with debris clearing, we help the citizens be able to clear up their roads. We do roof tarping and we will assist with water damage inside the home. We have 85 overnight volunteers with us right now that are being housed at the church and feed them and get them out on teams to help the community. We will take day volunteers we do orientation everyday to ready them for what we do by local guidelines and requirement by FEMA. Contact information for Samaritan Purse is 833-747-1234.

Lastly, Mr. Muhammad wanted to give his condolences to Yolanda Washington, thought and prayer with the family.

Mayor Ellis noted although we went through some tough times we got to see the best of our community, neighbors helping neighbors, sharing information and wanting to help and volunteer. We have been through a lot of these together and it goes to the spirit of who we are and as mayor it helps to hear from those out of town the welcoming nature line workers saying it's nice to see people handing out Gatorade and figuring out ways they can help them and those here doing restoration work from out of town saying how kind our people are. Thank you to our public works, first responders and Entergy as well as our council, fellow mayors, police jurors who were sharing needs finding ways to help. Because we didn't have power we couldn't tune in to see the eight, nine state disaster, it's no easy way to tell folks that folks are out there working really hard especially when you have been nine days without power however he can attest to the efforts that were being put in at the cost of their own lives to help restore power for our families. Thank you to those who fed, businesses, food banks etc., and we were proud that Monroe could be able to serve our neighbors and friends who needed a little help too. Also calls received for seniors who didn't have anybody to call and need assistance the mayor wants to figure out a way to leverage our senior academy that we do and figure out a way to put call trees together just to help check on one another and really help our seniors. Mayor Ellis gave an update on appropriations from our DC Delegations and thanked them. He thanked our crews for the cleanup after the parades and police and fire for keeping everyone safe.

Mr. McFarland – Chairman noted that Free Gift Baptist Church where he pastor open up their doors and had a warming station there because there was no facility on that end of town for those that were without power. He thanked everyone that contributed, he thanked Councilwoman Ezernack. The church stayed open for seven days as a warming station, and he thanked those that worked during this time. He noted that they were the first church to open their doors to be a warming station and other churches started. Our hearts go out to Yolanda Washington, Internal Auditor, who lost her mother and we are praying with her and for her. He noted that he has heard a lot about Entergy and what they have done with us and for us, but we have serious problems and we have to have some serious conversations about our infrastructure in the City of Monroe. Those without power for nine days or twelve days are unacceptable, so when these things happen, it's a lesson learned. We need to put our heads together to see what we can do to counteract such a storm as this the next time around. We can't be afraid to have these tough conversations, it's not putting anybody down, it's some issues we have to hit head on, talk about, probably have to go back to Washington to get some money to update some things in Monroe. Power was out too long; council members received a lot of phone calls and there were a lot of things we could not do. People thought we could flip a switch or make certain phone calls and lights would come on, but it was a process. He is asking the mayor to have some type of meeting/hearing where concerns can be heard and know which direction to go if something else like this happens. We cannot go to sleep on this; we cannot react we got to be proactive in these matters of those that suffered during this ice storm. Mr. McFarland made several requests to the mayor and then moved on through the agenda.

Announcement read into the minutes by the Chairman:

The Council received the Mayor's budget submission on January 29, 2026. We will hold budget hearings with the Administration on March 2, 3, and 4, beginning at 1:00 p.m. each day. Those meetings will be open to the public, but we will not have public comments or questions during those hearings. We will hold a public hearing on the budget, which will allow for public comment and input, at our regular meeting on March 10, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. right here in this chamber.

X: CITIZENS PARTICIPATION:

James Tatum, Transit Union #1160 Vice President came forward and wanted to know why it was taking so long for Legal to deal with their contract. He knows Mr. Creekbaum has had conversation with their CPA and the Vice President of International in Washington DC and conversating with him back and forth. They have been waiting since May 2025 and it is now 2026, why is it taking so long. The contract has expired and has not been delt with yet, but other unions in the region have been completed.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that he has been have discussions with the International Vice President who reached out last year and asked if we could have a series of informal away from the table discussions about issues that would be of importance in this contract. We have maintained communication over this and at any point in time we needed to come to the table to resolve this informal issue through formal negotiations

processes that door has always remained open. I stress that again today in an email that Mr. Tatum was copied on the door has always been open. We have always been willing to communicate, we never refuse any request for any information or for any position that the union in my discussions with the International Vice President and when they sent a letter today saying hey, let's get dates I responded within 2 minutes. You want dates send me your available dates, it's not a difficult process, absolutely will work with any union official or with any of the unions that want to sit at the table. We've been dealing with a process with the International Vice President at his request to discuss other issues and if they want to do a different process we'll go through that.

Mr. McFarland thanked Mr. Creekbaum for his explanation, and he hoped he can work with this union.

Mr. Johnnie Thomas noted that her councilman, Mr. McFarland, pulled a tree limb off the back of her car and her window was broken and she appreciate. She called to report a red light out and she called her engineer, Mr. McCallister, she knew he would get through to DOT faster than her and she went on to where she was going and when she came back the lights were working, she appreciated that and what everybody has done. Also, in the future she would like to see the debris off the pavement, and she would like to see some preventive maintenance with the wires through the trees.

Kenya Roberson, she dittoed what everyone said, and it really warmed her heart everyone working together in some shape form or fashion, whether you donated information, money, fed or whatever you did that's what make a city work. She wanted to thank the City of Monroe, she is on the Martin Luther King Jr. Foundation, they changed the path of the parade to make it longer so people could enjoy it. We are working to make next year bigger and better, she thanked everyone who participated. Now, it's time for the Black History parade February 28 and they will have the same route as last year.

XI: ADJOURN.

There being no further business to come before the council, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:53 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.