

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
February 24, 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 entered the meeting at 6:05pm.

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

Reverend Karus M. Leonard, Sr., 2nd Assistant to the Bishop, Greater Free Gift M. Baptist Church 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.

Councilman Harvey entered the meeting at 6:05pm.

Mrs. Ezernack asked the chairman for some time for Mr. Colden Brown with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and Office of Disaster Recovery & Resilience. Mr. Brown came forward and noted that SBA issued a disaster declaration in response to a request received from Gov. Jeff Landry on January 30. He explained that SBA offers relief to Louisiana small businesses and private nonprofits affected by 2026 severe winter storm. Information was given for online applications, customer service number, and email address for more information on disaster loan assistance available through economic injury disaster loans(EIDLs).

Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack, the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of February 10, 2026, were unanimously approved. Mr. Harvey abstained (No comments from the public.)

V: RESOLUTIONS:

1. Mayor's Office:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9085 ratifying an amendment to the contract between the City of Monroe and Southern Disaster Recovery, LLC to increase the not-to-exceed amount, further increasing the not-to-exceed amount, and providing for related matters.

Ms. Woods asked Mr. Creekbaum what they are asking council to ratify.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that the city went through the process of hiring two contractors Tetra Tech and SDR in this debris removal, there were not to exceed amounts in the contract and that is a typical recommendation from FEMA. The note to exceed amount for SDR is 1million and Tetra Tech \$250,000 and what they learned late last week is that the pickup efforts have increased and there are several crews throughout the City. There is a ton that has been picked up the cost was based on the amount of the debris being removed and other things in the calculations. In the case of SDR the contract for the 1 million dollars amount was reached over the weekend and Tetra Tech we got an updated number for today the not to exceed will be met by closing business today. In order to continue debris removal efforts yesterday and through today and with consultation with several members of the council there was a slight approval increase in the SDR amount from 1 million to 2 million to keep the operation running. The resolutions are before you with respect to both items for this council to decide if it wants to authorize a further increase

in the amount for the not to exceed amount. Mr. McCallister sent out an email a few hours ago discussing the administrations recommendation on that amount.

Mr. McCallister, City Engineer, explained that there was a not to exceed limit, it was recently increased to 2 million that will get the city to March 10th council meeting based on the calculations. The contractors estimate would be roughly 4 million for SDR and just shy of 1 million for Tetra Tech, so rather than coming to you and asking for a not to exceed limit of 5 million what they have done in coordination with the team and the mayor; they have spoken with SDR, our Public Works Department and coordinated a focused effort for the two entities. So SDR will focus on large trees, dangerous limbs that are hanging and piles that are now too large for Public Works to handle. So now they are asking for 3 million not to exceed limit with SDR and \$500,000 not to exceed limit with Tetra Tech. If they see that they will need more, they would like to reach out to council before the March 10th meeting and provide that information so they can be back here. They don't want to keep coming back doing the same thing, but they do feel it is important to put the cap based off their calculations now than just going for the full 5 million. Mr. McCallister reminded the council with the category A classification they will be able to get this money reimbursed. They have the team and have gone through the proper channels with Mr. Creekbaum's RFQ and the procurement of these contractors and the monitoring crew. The City will see a minimum of 75% of the city's money being reimbursed. He noted that they do understand that they are paying this upfront, they want to make sure that cash flow is monitored and it's done properly. They will see reimbursement in about 2 years.

Mrs. Woods questioned the city using their own equipment when the contractors were hired to do that.

Mr. McCallister explained procuring this company and having a monitor is to get the city's money back. If we didn't run this route, spend these funds we would not get our money back. In previous discussion and what Mr. Tolliver explained is that there were a certain number of tonnages that public works crews were able to remove in about a 4 or 5 day period shy of 500 tons. If public worked only worked on removal of this debris and lay aside any other public works, street works or whatever to keep the city running it would take 8 to 9 months to complete this task. Public Works has always been a part of this process, so if there is something that public works can do SDR will move on to the next task and do what our public crew can't handle. That's going to help keep our dollar amount even more so.

Mr. McFarland asked about how many trucks are running and how many were to be in each district every day.

Mr. McCallister explained that there are 10 trucks and they have a tracking map to see in real time where those trucks are and yes, the goal was to have one truck in each district at minimum, but they were able to get a least two in each district.

Mr. McFarland noted that he had debris still at his home and there were pictures sent to him that debris had been there a long time. When this was first brought to him and it was stated that this whole project was going to be between \$750,000 to 1.2 million, now we are over that and he can't see it. You are saying they are out there picking it up, but he can't see it and that's problematic. He is learning on tonight that even with the reimbursement it's going to be most likely two years before we get the money back.

Mr. Creekbaum said that was the length of time it took to get reimbursement from Hurricane Laura. Nobody from FEMA has said it will take two years to get reimbursement, and they can only go off how it worked in the past.

Mr. McCallister explained that the City is well ahead of our neighbors across the water and ahead of the game on this with the proper procedures in place to be able to move. We are fiscally responsible and have a great team and are able to pay for this and try to get as much of it back on the end as we can.

Mr. McFarland noted that the problem he is having right now is breaking the bank and with other projects going on and looking at having to put on hold in order to pay for all of this because you are asking for 3 million now, then probably asked for another 2 million. Mr. McFarland wanted to know how can this council get proof that the trucks are picking up in every district every day.

Mr. McCallister noted that they have maps and scatter sheets with equipment and if anyone from the council would like to see the operations on that use, they meet at 7:30am at the DEQ certified site. They meet there every morning for a meeting and they disburse throughout the city. Also, for clarification with state projects we are strictly talking about the Capital Infrastructure Tax Fund, this is being paid from our

general budget.

Mr. Creekbaum explained what a debris monitor does as it relates to FEMA reimbursements.

Ms. Woods stated that she is aware of monitors because she is in workforce development and she noted that they were in her district doing what they do and when she came back the debris was still there. She wanted to know what their process was.

Mr. McFarland noted that you all are saying it just takes a click of a button to send us the data and what Ms. Woods has made note of that pictures were taken and the debris was still there, he definitely wants to see the data. Mr. McCallister noted that he would be happy to sit down with him and entire council.

Ms. Woods asked for clarification on the ask tonight of 3 million.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that the burn rate which is the typical amount of debris volume that is being picked up on a daily basis and the best estimate based on the burn rate is going to 3 million dollars for SDR and based on SDR's conservative estimate of how much debris they estimate is left in the city said they believe it would take 4 million dollars to complete the total debris pick up. That should be sufficient to get to the March 10th council meeting and then reassess at the next council meeting. Mr. McCallister said earlier that they are taking some measures to try to keep that number down.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know when Southern Disaster Recovery (SDR) got here and you all have been communicating with them and they got out in the field, is it safe to say what they saw was even more tremendous.

Mr. McCallister noted that they knew it was going to be a phenomenal undertaking and expected it to exceed Hurricane Laura numbers parish wide.

Mr. Muhammad noted that you all have taken steps to scale back the threshold, but he is concern. This money takes time to be reimbursed, and the general fund will have to front it and then recoup it. His only concern is that the debris gets picked up in a timely matter. Public works will have to loop around and pick up those calls we get from our residents.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know how much they really think this project is going to cost the city.

Mayor Ellis explained that the reason they capped it at 3 million although knowing this was a 4 million dollar job the first number that came to you was based on the fact that it was Category B and the only reimbursement would be immediate within our window of 70 days that we would get reimbursed. If it was a Category A we would be having a completely different conversation and there would be no reimbursement, but since the Category A was there, we can go 5 million but that's not the goal. The goal was to focus the large trucks and contractors on items that public works cannot pick up and the team focus on the things we have the capacity to do. As far as cash flow we worked with Richard, Morgan and Brandon to look at our cash flow to ensure that we are not exposing ourselves in case there is an emergency. The city has always kept a healthy general fund balance and that's what it's for disasters and shutdowns so that our government can run effectively and efficiently.

Mr. McFarland wanted to know if SDR is subbing out any of this work and making sure minority business owners are being used, etc. He also wanted to know how much money the city has already spent on this project.

Mr. Creekbaum noted that Mrs. Gospel was going to get a list of subcontractors that SDR was using and he will get that information to the council.

Mr. McCallister noted that they are approaching 2 million total with the monitoring and pick up.

Mr. McFarland noted that we are at 2 million and you want 3 million and that's going to get us to March 10th and most likely we will be back again.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that on item (a) the request is to go to 3 million dollars and item (b) would be to go from \$250,000 to \$500,000. The total figure combined will be 3.5 million.

Mr. McCallister explained that they could come and ask for the full estimate and utilizing what we have

already implemented and SDR focus on the heavy stuff and Mr. Moore firms the money is in the general fund and come back March 10th and not ask for anything if that's the concern. But being transparent and being in contact with the council they are coming back to keep a 2 week touch.

Mrs. Ezernack noted that she appreciates them keeping the council in the loop like that to have these discussions like tonight. As far as the reimbursement from FEMA are there certain milestones that you can bill, invoice or send to get partial payment along the way.

Mr. McCallister said no and that this project will be complete before FEMA is accepting those reimbursements requests.

Mr. Creekbaum clarifies that it depends on how FEMA makes the money available for those Categories for reimbursement applications.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if public works was following these trucks that are going through the neighborhoods marking what they are not picking up.

Mr. Tolliver, Public Works Director, explained that they are not and that SDR is proving them with the list of stuff they are not picking up. This includes addresses and locations, and city trucks are dispatched. They are doing what they normally do.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know if Monroe was an entitlement city and the mayor said yes.

Mr. Harvey motioned with the value of 3 million dollars and it was seconded.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9086 authorizing an increase in the not-to-exceed amount under the debris monitoring contract between the City of Monroe and Tetra Tech, Inc., and providing for related matters.

Mr. Harvey motioned not to exceed \$500,000 and it was seconded.

Public comment: Kenya Roberson appreciate the council asking in reference to the subcontractors because she has mentioned at the last council meeting, she mentioned providing some type of coins to the locals any local companies. With this type of money there should be some trickling down to some companies or small businesses within the area. She wanted to go on record that she appreciates the services that are being provided. She wanted a listing of businesses being used going forward because she has been receiving calls from businesses that have not been contacted, but not that some have not but the ones who have contacted her.

2. Council:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9087 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Twin City Art Foundation for an Exhibition: Annual Juried Competition at the Masur Museum of Art pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D (Open Container Ordinance) and further providing with respect thereto.

3. Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to consider a request from the Purchasing Division for authorization to advertise for bids for the Powell Community Center Parking Lot Project. The cost estimate for the Powell Community Center Parking Lot Project is \$460,000.00.

Ms. Woods wanted to say thank you and that this was a project that they have been waiting for, for a very long time.

Mr. McCallister explained that at the Powell Community Center they are doing a parking lot rehabilitation including pavement, sidewalks, landscaping and lighting. Groundbreaking is in 2 months.

Mr. Muhammad asked if the parking lots will be connected because he is concerned about the entrance and exit. Mr. McCallister said it will be connected.

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to consider a request from the Purchasing Division for authorization to advertise for bids for the Civic Center Parking Lot Repairs Project. The cost estimate for the Civic Center Parking Lot Repairs Project is \$2,000,000.00.

4. Planning and Urban Dev.

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9088 authorizing a contract with MDW Enterprise, LLC for lead remediation at 2609 Gordon Avenue and further providing with respect thereto.

(b) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9089 Adopt a Resolution modifying the Fy 2025 Community Development Block Grant Public Service Allocation and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Muhammad wanted to know what's causing the modification.

Mrs. Hill, PUD Director, explained that all they are doing is switching agencies out.

5. Engineering Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9090 authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development to accept the donation of reclaimed asphalt on the La 594 (La 15 – Russell Sage Road) Project (H.015245).

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9091 authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation & Development to accept the donation of reclaimed asphalt on the U.S. 165-Business & La 840-6 Project (H.015247).

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9092 approving and publishing the Official Firearm-Free Zone Maps pursuant to La. R.S. 14:95.6 and further providing with respect thereto.

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

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

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,286 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.

VII: COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Ellis presented a presentation concerning the winter storm cleanup efforts, DeSiard Street Improvements and Federal appropriations for Fy26.

Ms. Woods said thank you for your patience as we have real conversations about what's going on with our city and how we are navigating through this debris cleanup.

Mr. Muhammad – Vice-Chairman- thanks for declaring us a category 8 and the governor for declaring our area a disaster area so we can be in a position to be reimbursed for our cleanups. He further made some upcoming announcement reminders of the Black History Parade February 28th, he is having a community meeting on March 5th at Henrietta Johnson. Mr. Muhammad inquired about the Pavilion at Benoit and what they are doing because he would like to see that remain part of the center. Also, there are lights out along Winnsboro Road

Mr. McFarland – Chairman- also mentioned the lights on Winnsboro Road and that he and Mr. Muhammad share that district. Mr. McFarland apologized for missing the DeSiard Street ribbon cutting, he got his time wrong.

VIII: CITIZENS PARTICIPATION:

Detrick Massey, 1900 Hickory Street, came to remind everyone of the Olympics that they will be holding on June 19th – 21st at ULM.

Kenya Roberson, 116 Glenwood, came forward to announce the Black History Parade on this weekend and thank you to public work and the police department in advance. They still have applications until Wednesday.

XI: ADJOURN.

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

Rodney McFarland, I
Chairman

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.