

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
May 26, 2026
6:00PM

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 present: Ms. Woods, Mr. Harvey, Mr. Muhammad, and Mr. McFarland

There absent: Mrs. Ezernack

Chairman McFarland announced that the quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance would be led by Pastor Herbert Ford of Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church.

Rules of the Day: Chairman McFarland 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. Chairman McFarland 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. Chairman McFarland also advised department heads they could address agenda items pertaining to their departments without time limitations.

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Muhammad, the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of May 12, 2026, were approved. (Mr. Harvey abstained) (No comments from the public)

1. Council:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9133 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to Damon Williams "Doc Chilly Presents" for (A Music & Dance Event) at the Louisiana Purchase Gardens & Zoo pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance) and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9134 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Krewe of Janus for (Twin Cities 250th Anniversary Parade) starting in Monroe at the Ouachita River on Louisville Avenue pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12.231 D (Open Container Ordinance) and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

2. Planning & Urban Development:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9135 authorizing a contract with Henry Rose Construction, LLC for lead remediation at 2408 South Grand and providing for related matters.

(b) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9136 authorizing the City of Monroe to apply for additional grant funding through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) "Older Adult Home Modification" grant program and providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9137 authorizing certain State Legislative Appropriation Revitalization Project Agreements for Residential Redevelopment Projects within the Bryant's Addition area and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

3. Department of Administration:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Harvey and unanimously approved an Application by Aramark Educational Services dba Aramark at ULM, 201 Bayou Drive, Monroe LA 71203 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) (No comments from the public)

(b) Adopt a Resolution accepting the bid of _____ for the Monroe Civic Center Parking Lot Repairs and further providing with respect thereto.

A substitute motion to reject the bid made at the request of Administration;

Upon substitute motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9138 rejecting the bid for the Monroe Civic Center Parking Lot Repairs Project and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

Mr. Muhammed inquired about the anticipated timeframe from the item to return before council and requested clarification regarding the bid.

Mr. McCallister explained that the resolution presented to the council was intended to formally reject the submitted bid for the Monroe Civic Center Parking Lot Repairs Project. He advised that the project was originally estimated at approximately \$2 million; however, after adding lighting, landscaping, drainage, and traffic flow improvements, projected costs increased to nearly \$3 million. Upon opening the bids, the lowest proposal received totaled approximately \$3.9 million, resulting in the recommendation to reject the bids.

Mr. Muhammad asked whether lighting improvements had been included within the project scope.

Mr. McCallister stated that lighting improvements were always part of the parking lot project. After further review, it was determined the existing poles would not provide adequate long-term lighting coverage. He advised that the \$3.9 million proposal was the lowest bid received, while other bids exceeded \$5 million, leading to the recommendation to reject the bids due to higher-than-expected costs.

Chairman McFarland stated that the revised amount remained over budget.

Mr. McCallister further advised that the bids returned between approximately \$2.8 and \$2.9 million and would likely have been recommended for approval. However, the additional funding needed for the project was no longer available because those funds had been allocated elsewhere. He requested the council reject the bids so administration could develop an alternative plan for the parking lot improvements.

Chairman McFarland advised that if one bid was rejected, then both bids should be rejected. He further stated that he was dissatisfied with the submitted bid amounts.

Ms. Woods questioned whether council should vote down the existing resolution and subsequently add another resolution to the agenda.

Chairman McFarland advised that discussion should remain limited to the agenda item currently before the council.

Sydney Clary, Assistant City Attorney, advised that the matter could be handled through a substitute motion since the issue involved rejection of the bid rather than acceptance. Ms. Clary explained that the substitute motion would replace the acceptance motion with a rejection motion.

Chairman McFarland stated that the substitute motion would ensure the council remained legally compliant regarding the matter.

Mr. Muhammad stated that if lighting improvements were being incorporated into the project, he would like to review the associated costs. He noted that the original project request totaled approximately \$2 million and requested clarification regarding the revised amount including lighting improvements.

Mr. McCallister advised that bids related solely to lighting improvements totaled approximately \$650,000. He explained that the lighting project involved entirely new infrastructure, including conduits routed too. Mr. McCallister advised that lighting improvements had always been included as part of the project; however, the original intent was to evaluate the existing infrastructure and replace the assemblies located on the current poles. He advised that the final amount would depend upon the submitted bids and noted that the bids for lighting improvements ranged from approximately \$650,000 to \$800,000.

Mr. Muhammad stated that he simply wanted to know the estimated amounts beforehand so that future bidding proposals could remain within the established threshold.

Mr. McCallister advised that throughout his tenure with the city, there had only been two bid rejections. He explained that project estimates are originally prepared based on property valuations and engineering assessments available at the time bids are requested. Mr. McCallister further advised that administration should contact distributors and contractors and work alongside the engineering team to prepare an updated cost estimate.

Ms. Woods stated that Mr. McCallister requested the council reject the proposal and revisit the matter later. She asked whether administration planned to temporarily clean and restripe the parking lot while preparing for the Louisiana Municipal Association conference instead of moving forward with additional improvements.

Mr. McCallister clarified that the parking lot on the south side recently underwent drive area repairs involving a drainage structure that remained covered with gravel. He explained that although larger asphalt improvements were recommended for rejection, administration planned to work with Public Works to complete immediate repairs, cleanup, and restriping. Mr. McCallister added that the Civic Center parking lot served both Louisiana Municipal Association events and daily public use, and administration intended to complete temporary repairs before returning to the council with a revised proposal.

Chairman McFarland stated that the matter appeared to be primarily driven by preparations for the Louisiana Municipal Association conference but noted that he personally leaned in a different direction regarding the proposal.

(c) Upon motion by Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad, a Resolution accepting the bid of Grindstone Construction, LLC for the Monroe Civic Center Space Planning Improvements Project and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public) (Ms. Woods, Chairman McFarland, Mr. Muhammad Voted-Nay)

Mr. Muhammad stated that the original project bid totaled approximately \$3.5 million and that the council had requested the amount be reduced to approximately \$2.7 million. Based on Mr. McCallister's breakdown, Mr. Muhammad stated the total project cost still appeared to remain at approximately \$3.5 million.

Mr. McCallister advised that the overall project scope had not changed. He explained, the original estimate remained approximately \$3.5 million before being presented to the council. Mr. McCallister stated administration initially requested approval for only a portion of the amount, approximately \$2.7 to \$2.8 million, to encourage lower bid pricing, and contractors generally submit bids closer to the engineer's estimate and that adding alternate project items later increased the overall cost. He advised returning the total amount to approximately \$3.5 million was appropriate and stated that Mr. Muhammad's understanding of the process was correct.

Mr. Muhammad stated that his understanding was that the project had been scaled back to approximately \$2.7 million; however, if the project remained near \$3.5 million and new alternates were later added, the council would effectively be considering an overall amount closer to \$4.2 million. Mr. Muhammad reiterated that the established project amount was approximately \$2.7 million.

Mr. McCallister advised that the items referred to were originally included within the project scope but had later been separated into alternates. He explained that accepting the proposal would require approval of the base bid totaling approximately \$2.8 million, which had already been generally approved by the council before the project was formally advertised.

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to Consider the request from the Purchasing Division for authorization for an authorized city representative to advertise for bids for the Airport Airfield Marking Project. The estimate for the Airport Airfield Markings Project is \$600,000.00. (No comments from the public)

Mr. Muhammad asked whether the project involved part-time employees.

Mr. Charles Butcher, Airport Director, advised that the project involved full-time operations. He explained that conditions at the airfield were beginning to deteriorate and further stated that the FA had agreed to fund approximately 95% of the project costs while the State would contribute the remaining 5%. Mr. Butcher advised that no city funds would be required and emphasized that the project was necessary because conditions at the airfield continued to decline.

(e) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey, and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9139 accepting the bids of G T Distributors, Inc. and Guidry's Uniforms for police equipment and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(f) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9140 accepting the bids of Gall's, LLC and Guidry's Uniforms for police uniforms and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(g) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9141 accepting the bids of Guidry's Uniforms for police specialized uniforms and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

4. Engineering Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9142 accepting the work performed by Amethyst Construction, Inc for the Monroe Civic Center Drainage Repairs-South Parking Lot Project as substantially complete and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Woods asked whether the gravel referenced was related to a separate drainage project.

Mr. McCallister advised that the gravel work was part of a separate project and explained that the project involved significant repairs to a major drainage trunk line that had begun collapsing beneath the drive area. He advised that due to the collapse, the area had been barricaded and covered with steel plates for safety purposes. Mr. McCallister stated that the matter had previously been presented before the council for approval and that administration was now requesting approval for substantial completion of the drainage repair project.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Consider the request from Laura Underwood for a Major Conditional Use Permit for an existing salon & spa, in the B-2 (Neighborhood Business) District, at 1851 Avenue of America to allow the sale of alcohol for consumption on premise. This is a Major Conditional Use Permit to allow the sale of alcohol for consumption on-premise, with the B-2 (Neighborhood Business) District. The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-2 (Neighborhood Business) District. Major Conditional Uses are uses that require a second level of approval; therefore, this request comes before City Council for their approval in addition to that of Planning Commission.

Laura Underwood advised that the request was intended to provide complimentary beverages to salon and spa clients while receiving services, like practices commonly offered at upscale establishments. She stated that the business did not intend to operate as a bar or nightclub and advised that alcohol service would be limited to wine, champagne, and beer only. Ms. Underwood further explained that the beverages would remain complimentary and secondary to the salon and spa services provided. She also noted that the business had applied for all necessary permits and approvals to remain compliant with city and state regulations.

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9143 approving an amendment to the Master Engineering Services Agreement with Neel-Schaffer, Inc. To extend the term thereof. (No comments from the public)

(d) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9144 approving Amendment No. 2 to the Professional Service Agreement with Waggoner Engineering, Inc. for management service related to the water pollution control center and wastewater collection and transmission system and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(e) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9145 approving Task Order No. 23 between the City of Monroe and Volkert, Inc for the Thomas Avenue Water Booster Station Improvement Project and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

VI: INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTION & ORDINANCES:

(a) Due to no motion offered the Ordinance amending and supplementing the City of Monroe Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and further providing with respect thereto, failed to be introduced. (This item was passed over from 05/12/2026 meeting)

Chairman McFarland noted item failed due to the lack of a motion.

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

Chairman McFarland opened the Public Hearing.

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,299 establishing zero tolerance for racial discrimination, racist remarks, and hostile work environment conduct by city employees; providing for investigation, disciplinary action, mandatory training, and reporting requirements; otherwise providing with respect thereto.

Charles Theus, 503 Speed Avenue, addressed the council during the public hearing regarding concerns stemming from a previous I-20 Board Meeting. Mr. Theus stated that his character had been questioned by a city employee and expressed that he believed the situation was motivated by personal bias rather than race. He further advised that the matter escalated after he publicly challenged the employee regarding a

complaint and noted that the issue has since resulted in ongoing litigation. Mr. Theus expressed concern regarding the treatment of employees within the workplace.

Public hearing was closed.

Mr. Harvey proposed an amendment to section 1. All members of city boards, commissions, and committees appointed by the City Council and a removal provision that any confirmed violation should be grounds for removal under the appointing authority standard removal procedures.

Chairman McFarland advised that the proposed amendment failed due to the lack of a second motion. He stated that recent concerns involving alleged discrimination, inappropriate remarks, and hostile workplace conduct demonstrated the need for additional policies and procedures. Chairman McFarland further emphasized that city employees and appointed officials should be held to a higher professional standard and advised that the matter would revert to the original ordinance for council consideration.

Chairman McFarland opened the Public Hearing.

(b) Upon motion Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,300 approving the Annexation of ±26 acres, extending and enlarging the boundaries of the City of Monroe, Louisiana; providing for recordation of the revised boundary; establishing an effective date; and otherwise providing for related matters.

Cecilia Bell, 300 Kincaid Drive, Waldorf Maryland 20603, operating member of The Vault, LLC of Maryland, addressed the council regarding the proposed annexation of Belhaven Estates, formerly known as Buckhorn Bend. Ms. Bell advised that her team had invested in Monroe over the past several years due to the need for additional quality workforce housing within the city. She stated that the project was intended to create homeownership opportunities for working families while encouraging neighborhood revitalization and long-term economic growth throughout Monroe. Ms. Bell further explained that the development would be privately funded through lending partners and that the City of Monroe would not be responsible for construction costs. She advised that the project would generate tax revenue, utility revenue, and additional neighborhood investment for the community. Ms. Bell respectfully requested council approval of the annexation into the City of Monroe.

Public hearing was closed.

Mr. Muhammad Ms. Bell for her presentation and expressed support for the proposed development. He stated that the project represented more than affordable housing and would create long-term value and investment opportunities for South Monroe. Mr. Muhammad further advised that developments of this nature had not occurred in the area for many years and stated that he fully supported the annexation request.

Chairman McFarland expressed support for the annexation and stated that the project could positively impact housing and economic growth on the south side of Monroe.

Ms. Woods thanked Ms. Bell for selecting Monroe for the proposed development project. She stated that she had witnessed the organization's revitalization efforts throughout District 3, including the rehabilitation of previously dilapidated homes. Ms. Woods further advised that those improvements had positively impacted surrounding neighborhoods and expressed appreciation for the organization's continued investment in the Monroe community.

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

(c) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,301 amending and re-enacting Chapter 5 (Ambulance Services) of the Code of Ordinance of the City of Monroe to establish a uniform ambulance service system and to provide for the licensing and regulation of a sole provider of ambulance services.

XIII: CITIZENS PARTICIPATION:

Detrick Massey, 1900 Hickey Street, addressed the council regarding the upcoming track event and Olympic related travel. Ms. Massey advised that her team had approximately three weeks remaining before departure and stated that preparations were progressing well. She further advised that representatives from ULM recently conducted a walkthrough of the facilities and expressed satisfaction with the arrangements. Ms. Massey stated that the events were scheduled to take place June 19th through June 21st.

Chairman McFarland requested that Ms. Massey meet with Yolanda Washington, Internal Auditor, following the council meeting. Chairman McFarland further advised that he wanted to explore ways the city could contribute to and support the cause. Ms. Woods and Mr. Muhammad also agreed.

IX: COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ms. Woods advised that illegal dumping and storm debris continued to be a major concern within district 3. She commended Mr. Toliver and his crew for their ongoing debris recovery efforts and referenced photographs showing large debris piles, including a significant tree branch. Ms. Woods asked whether heavy-duty equipment was available to remove the large branch.

Mr. Toliver advised that specialized heavy-duty equipment would need to be subcontracted to complete the removal.

Ms. Woods further stated that the combination of debris piles and recent rainfall could increase flooding concerns for residents in affected areas. She again thanked Mr. Toliver and his crew for their continued hard work and dedication to cleanup efforts.

Mr. Muhammad – **Vice Chairman** addressed concerns regarding illegal dumping and storm debris in the Atkins Quarters area. He stated that dumping had become increasingly problematic and called for stronger enforcement efforts to identify those responsible. He noted that some debris was linked to nearby renovation projects and improper dumping along roadways instead of at designated sites. Mr. Muhammad warned that unattended storm debris could lead to continued illegal dumping and encouraged improved coordination among local agencies to address the issue. Mr. Muhammad also referenced the district 5 Housing Authority Project, noting that approximately \$6 million had been invested into the development. He emphasized the council's responsibility to ensure transparency, accountability, and proper oversight of taxpayer funds. He further stated that budget amendments should clearly outline funding sources, financial impacts, and long-term consequences. Mr. Muhammad stressed that public funds should not be reallocated without formal council approval and advocated for ongoing financial discussions and quarterly budget reviews to maintain fairness, integrity, and fiscal responsibility. He concluded by stating that the council would continue working to gain a clearer understanding of the 2026–2027 budget process so discussions could move forward appropriately.

Chairman McFarland – **Chairman** addressed concerns regarding late agenda items and budget-related resolutions, emphasizing the need for greater transparency and oversight to prevent unauthorized spending. He stated that council members should carefully review resolutions and noted that independent legal reviews would be obtained when necessary. Chairman McFarland also addressed concerns surrounding a previously discussed \$100,000 SEED allocation and advised that only two council members attended the related quarterly meeting where funding updates were expected. He stressed the importance of timely communication and stated that requested information should be provided promptly, with zero tolerance for delays or disrespect regarding council requests. Chairman McFarland also commended Mr. Toliver and his crew for improvements made throughout the south side of Monroe and noted that additional trucks were expected to assist with debris removal efforts. He further emphasized the need for stronger enforcement against illegal dumping and debris violations. Chairman McFarland advised that the council had approved a professional services contract for Ms. Sonya Jacobs and appointed Mr. Muhammad and Ms. Woods to assist with negotiations before the next council meeting. He announced that the next council meeting would be held June 9th at 4:00 p.m. and advised that all scheduled individuals on the agenda were expected to attend.

There being no further business to come before the council, Chairman McFarland adjourned the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

Rodney McFarland, I
Chairman

Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Erica L. Moore
Staff Secretary

For extended details on the council meeting, please call the Council Clerk Monday-Friday at 318-329-2252 to schedule an appointment to listen to the minute recording.