City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
June 23, 2026
5:00PM

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 led by Rev. Dr. A. B. Davis Johnson, Rose of Sharon 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 June 9, 2026, were approved. (Mr. Harvey abstained) (No comments from the public)

V: Receipt of Veto Read into the minutes.

Ms. Carolus Riley, Council Clerk, read into the minutes the following: (The Mayor vetoed Ordinance No. 12,299 and 12,300 and returned them to the Council on June 10, 2026, at 10:42am. The Mayor's vetoes, along with his veto messages, were delivered to the Council on June 10, 2026, at 10:57 am. The vetoes and veto messages for the Ordinances will be maintained in the Council records.)

VI: Council Discussion of Vetoes

Ms. Woods stated that she supported Ordinance 12,299 because she believes the Council has a responsibility to be informed of employee complaints and concerns to help ensure all employees are treated fairly and equitably. She emphasized that the ordinance was not intended to interfere with the day-to-day operations of City departments or to micromanage staff, but rather to establish a reporting process that keeps the Council informed while allowing the administration to address concerns in a timely and appropriate manner. She noted that the proposal was intended to increase transparency, accountability, and public confidence in the City's complaint process. Ms. Woods expressed disappointment with the veto of Ordinance 12,300, stating that the proposed annexation represented an opportunity for responsible growth within the City. She explained that expanding the City's boundaries would have increased the tax base, encouraged economic development, and created additional housing opportunities in South Monroe. She further stated that the proposed subdivision would have brought quality homes to the community and viewed the project as an important investment in the City's long-term growth and future development.

Mr. Muhammad expressed his support for the proposed annexation, stating that improved communication between the City and developers is essential to encouraging responsible growth and investment in South Monroe. He explained that early disclosure of development plans can sometimes discourage projects before they have an opportunity to move forward, and he emphasized the importance of working collaboratively to address concerns while continuing to promote economic development. He stated that the proposed annexation would have provided quality housing, encouraged additional retail and business investment, and strengthened future development on the south side of the City. Mr. Muhammad expressed disappointment with the Mayor's veto, noting that the Council had previously supported similar redevelopment efforts and believed this project represented another opportunity to improve the community. Mr. Muhammad also reaffirmed his support for Ordinance 12,299, explaining that its purpose was to provide the Council with updates regarding employee complaints and the actions taken to address them. He stated that the ordinance was intended to improve transparency and accountability rather than interfere with administrative responsibilities. He concluded by emphasizing the Council's commitment to ensuring complaints are addressed fairly, advocating for transparency, and continuing to represent the interests of the residents.

Chairman McFarland stated that ordinances carry the force of law, while policies may be changed or disregarded. He expressed concern over the Mayor's vetoes of Ordinances 12,299 and 12,300, stating that he believed both measures were intended to strengthen accountability and reinforce the Council's legislative authority. Regarding Ordinance 12,299, he explained that its purpose was to establish a formal reporting process to keep the Council informed of employee complaints while allowing the administration to address those matters appropriately. He also disagreed with the reasoning provided for vetoing Ordinance 12,300, stating that undeveloped properties had previously been annexed into the City. He believed the proposed South Monroe development would have expanded the City's tax base, encouraged economic growth, and provided additional quality housing opportunities. He expressed concern that rejecting the project could discourage future investment and development within the community. Chairman McFarland further commented on the working relationship between the Council and the administration, stating that improved communication and collaboration would better serve the City's interests. He reaffirmed his commitment to representing the residents of District 4 and advocating for fairness, transparency, and accountability in City government. He concluded by expressing hope that future disagreements could be resolved more collaboratively while emphasizing the Council's responsibility to continue addressing matters brought before it.

VII: <u>INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTION & ORDINANCES:</u>

(a)Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and approved to introduce an ordinance proposing an amendment to the Home Rule Charter of the City of Monroe, Louisiana, to amend Section 2-13(c) (Submission of Ordinances to the Mayor) so as to reduce the vote required for the council to override a mayoral veto from two-thirds of its authorized membership to a majority of its authorized membership; providing that the amendment shall become effective only upon ratification by a majority of the qualified electors voting thereon; directing submission of the proposed amendment to the electorate pursuant to Section 7-04 of the Charter and Article VI, Section 5 of the Louisiana Constitution; and otherwise providing with respect thereto. (Mr. Harvey nay)

Charles Theus 503 Speed Ave, Monroe La 71201, stated that the proposed measure is a charter amendment and explained that, under the City Charter, charter amendments are not subject to the Mayor's veto authority.

Chairman McFarland stated that the City Attorney should review the Charter to clarify the Mayor's authority regarding charter amendments and veto powers.

Mr. Creekbaum read the applicable Charter provision stating that amendments proposed by the Council to the City Charter are not vetoable by the Mayor.

Chairman McFarland asked if everyone understood the Charter provision that had been read.

Ms. Woods explained that the proposed charter amendment would limit the Mayor's veto authority by allowing a veto to be overridden with a simple majority vote if approved by the voters. She clarified that the current Charter requires a two-thirds majority to override a veto, while the proposed amendment would reduce that requirement to a simple majority.

Chairman McFarland asked whether there were any additional questions from the public and invited anyone interested to obtain a copy of the City Charter for further understanding of the Council's authority.

(b)Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and approved to introduce an ordinance prohibiting discrimination, harassment, retaliation, race-based decision-making, and the misuse of official position to knowingly or recklessly make materially false attributions of racial motive by persons exercising governmental authority on behalf of the city; preserving executive authority, civil service rights, confidentiality, and all remedies provided by law; and otherwise providing with respect thereto. (Mr. Harvey nay) (No comments from the public)

1. <u>Council:</u>

(a)Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9152 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to Silas White for an event (Souled Out Sunday – a Blues Music Event on Forsythe boat dock side) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

2. <u>Planning & Urban Development</u>

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9153 authorizing the City of Monroe to apply for and accept Fy 25 HUD/Emergency Solutions Grant Programs Funding. (No comments from the public)

3. Department of Administration:

(a)Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Muhammad and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9154 accepting the quote of Twin City Striping & Maintenance, LLC for the City Facility Sandblasting (Phase 1) Project. (No comments from the public)

Mr. McCallister explained that the proposed project involves sandblasting the curbs at the Civic Center and City Hall to remove deteriorated paint down to the concrete surface. He stated that once the preparation work is complete, the curbs will be repainted with the appropriate markings, including designated fire lanes and handicap-accessible areas.

Chairman McFarland requested the total cost of the project.

Mr. McCallister advised that the project cost is approximately $69,200, which is below the original estimated cost of $75,000.

Chairman McFarland asked whether the project was being completed in preparation for the Louisiana Municipal Association (LMA) event and if the recommended contractor submitted the lowest bid.

Mr. McCallister confirmed that the work is being completed in preparation for the LMA event and that the recommended proposal represented the lowest bid received.

(b)Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved a request from the Purchasing Division for authorization for an authorized City representative to advertise for bids for G.B. Cooley House Rehabilitation Project. The estimate for the G.B. Cooley House Rehabilitation Project is $825,000.00. (No comments from the public)

Chairman McFarland stated that he needed additional clarification because he believed the item had previously been approved by the Council.

Mr. McCallister confirmed that the Council had previously authorized advertising the project. He explained that no acceptable bids were received because potential bidders did not attend the mandatory pre-bid meeting. He requested approval to readvertise the project without the mandatory pre-bid requirement, noting that the project is unique due to its historic preservation funding and partnership with the G.B. Cooley House Board.

Chairman McFarland stated that he remembered discussing the project previously and understood that the City expected to be reimbursed for much of the project cost.

Mr. McCallister explained that while the City expects to reduce its financial responsibility, the G.B. Cooley House Board is continuing to raise private funds, so the City's final contribution cannot yet be guaranteed.

Chairman McFarland asked whether the City's remaining financial obligation would be less than $400,000.

Mr. McCallister stated that the total project cost is approximately $825,000, with a Save America's Treasures grant of $483,500 covering more than half of the project. He advised that the City's remaining obligation would depend on the final project costs.

Ms. Woods asked whether the grant funding was designated exclusively for the G.B. Cooley restoration project or if it could be used for other historic preservation efforts.

Mr. McCallister clarified that the grant is specifically designated for the G.B. Cooley House restoration project.

Ms. Woods asked what the City's financial responsibility would be under the grant agreement.

Mr. McCallister explained that the City would be responsible for the remaining project balance after grant funding. He noted that the capital infrastructure budget includes funding for the project and that the grant remains active through the extended deadline.

Ms. Woods confirmed that the restoration project would be funded through the capital infrastructure program and asked whether it had been included in the annual infrastructure strategy.

Mr. McCallister confirmed that the project had been included in the City's budget and infrastructure planning for the past several years.

Chairman McFarland asked about the anticipated timeline for readvertising the project.

Mr. McCallister stated that, if approved, the project would be advertised beginning the following week for three consecutive weeks. He explained that after bids are opened, the City must observe the required public bidding period before returning the bids to the Council for consideration.

4. Public Works Department:

(a)Upon motion by Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9155 approving Change Order No. two (2) for the Taxiway Delta Construction Phase I Project and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

Ms. Woods asked Mr. Charles Butcher to provide an update on the Taxiway Delta Project and explain the agenda items related to the project.

Mr. Butcher reported that Phase 1 of the Taxiway Delta Project has been substantially completed and came in approximately $1.2 million under budget. He explained that the change order was necessary to close out the grant and noted that only minor work remains before the phase is fully complete.

Ms. Woods asked whether Phase 1 of the project had been completed.

Mr. Butcher confirmed that the primary construction work is complete, with only minor items remaining, and stated that the taxiway is currently in use.

Mr. Muhammad asked whether the project was funded through federal sources and whether any remaining funds could be applied toward the City's local costs.

Mr. Butcher explained that the project is funded through federal and state sources and that there was no cost to the City. He further advised that any remaining grant funds would be returned and applied to other eligible projects rather than retained locally.

Chairman McFarland asked whether any savings from the project could be used for additional airport improvements.

Mr. Butcher stated that additional airport projects are planned, but the remaining grant funds cannot be retained by the City for discretionary use.

Ms. Woods asked whether the funds would remain available to the City.

Mr. Butcher reiterated that unused grant funds would be returned for other approved projects and explained that the next agenda item involves Phase 2 of the Taxiway Delta Project. He stated that Phase 2 consists of relocating underground cables to allow paving to continue and that the work must be completed in phases in accordance with FAA funding requirements.

(b) Upon motion by Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9156 approving work authorization No. 9 between the City of Monroe and Garver LLC for the Taxiway D Construction – Phase 2 Project at the Monroe Regional Airport and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

Chairman McFarland asked Mr. Butcher to explain the Phase 2 Taxiway Delta Project.

Mr. Butcher explained that Phase 2 of the Taxiway Delta Project involves relocating underground cables to allow paving work to continue and to improve the airport's taxiway system. He stated that the project is being completed in phases to bring the airport into compliance with current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards, including improvements near the intersection of the two runways.

Chairman McFarland asked whether the project was expected to result in any cost savings.

Mr. Butcher stated that the City is hopeful the project will generate savings but noted that final costs cannot be determined until the bidding process is complete.

IX: CITIZENS PARTICIPATION:

Mr. Lester Paster 100 South Pointe Dr. Apt 301, addressed the Council regarding concerns he has documented on his website related to matters he believes involve injustice. As a military veteran, he requested that the Council and Mayor review the information he has provided and consider his concerns. He expressed frustration over the length of time the matter remained unresolved and asked the Council to assist in ensuring the issue is reviewed so that additional legal action or public demonstrations would not be necessary.

X: COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ms. Woods announced the City's community cleanup initiative, advising residents that free dumpsters would be available at two District 3 locations for three days. She encouraged residents to participate, outlined items that would not be accepted, and invited the public to take advantage of the program. She also congratulated Mr. Creekbaum on the birth of his child before asking for clarification regarding the disaster recovery expenditures, Tetra Tech, and the use of a budget amendment rather than an emergency ordinance.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that the matter had been discussed extensively with the Council and Mayor. He stated that the debris removal and monitoring services were professional services and were not subject to the public bid process. Because the total costs were unknown at the time, the administration determined that using a budget amendment after all expenses were identified would be the most appropriate approach rather than adopting multiple emergency ordinances. He added that the Council approved the expenditures but later chose not to approve the related budget amendment.

Ms. Woods stated that she requested the explanation simply as a refresher regarding the budget amendment process.

Mr. Creekbaum reiterated that an emergency ordinance could have been used, but because the final costs were unknown, the administration believed it was more appropriate to wait until all expenses were quantified before presenting a budget amendment to the Council.

Ms. Woods thanked Mr. Creekbaum for the clarification. She then expressed condolences to the families affected by the recent fatal shooting and extended well wishes to the injured victim. She voiced concern about public safety in the community and stated that she intends to work with the Council, the administration, and local law enforcement to identify solutions that will help improve safety in public spaces and prevent similar incidents in the future.

Mr. Muhammad Vice Chairman stated that he has been working with Mr. Creekbaum to strengthen the City's loitering ordinance. He explained that the proposed revisions would increase accountability for business owners, address late-night crowding around businesses and entertainment venues, and provide additional enforcement measures, including potential fines. He also announced upcoming community cleanup efforts, identifying dumpster locations and encouraging residents to participate. Mr. Muhammad further inquired about the status of condemnation proceedings, noting that no condemnation items had recently come before the Council due to the absence of a curator.

Mr. Creekbaum advised that condemnation matters are expected to return to the Council at the next meeting. He explained that previous delays were caused by scheduling conflicts, weather-related cancellations, and administrative requirements, including delays in receiving necessary documentation.

Mr. Muhammad expressed concerns regarding ongoing trespassing, vacant properties, and public safety issues in the King Oaks area. He referenced damaged fencing that has allowed unauthorized access through neighborhoods and vacant homes, as well as recent criminal activity that has raised concerns among residents. He encouraged the City to move forward with additional condemnation efforts and property enforcement measures to address abandoned structures, reduce blight, and improve neighborhood safety.

Chairman McFarland thanked those in attendance and announced additional community cleanup efforts, noting that six dumpsters would be placed throughout the district. He encouraged residents to review the cleanup guidelines and participate in the initiative. He then raised questions regarding a debris removal contract, expressing concerns about an additional contractor and requesting clarification on the Council's approval of expenditures exceeding $500,000.

Mr. Creekbaum stated that he was not familiar with the specific matter Chairman McFarland referenced.

Chairman McFarland stated that he intended to provide Mr. Creekbaum with the information for review and requested clarification regarding the contracts. He also expressed concerns about Civic Center rental agreements, stating that he believed some contract terms and rental rates should be reviewed to ensure fairness and consistency.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that Civic Center rental agreements are generally standard forms and noted that he does not routinely review every contract. He agreed to review the agreements referenced by Chairman McFarland to determine whether any concerns should be addressed.

Chairman McFarland reiterated his concerns regarding the fairness of certain rental agreements and stated that he intended to continue reviewing the matter until it was resolved. He emphasized the importance of transparency, accountability, and equitable treatment in City business. He also expressed support for proposed public safety initiatives discussed by the Council, encouraged residents to remain safe during the Fourth of July holiday, and offered condolences to families who had recently lost loved ones. He concluded by addressing concerns about statements made publicly regarding a press conference, explaining that he was unable to attend due to the timing of the notification and reaffirmed his commitment to continuing his work on behalf of the community

There being no further business to come before the council, Chairman McFarland adjourned the meeting at 6:22PM.

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.