City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
July 14, 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, Mrs. Ezernack, Mr. McFarland, and Mr. Muhammad

There absent: Mr. Harvey

Chairman McFarland announced that the quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Rev Angela Thomas – Assistance to the Bishop at the Greater Free Gift Baptist Church

Chairman McFarland announced in accordance with the City Charter, the Council would conduct its annual election for Chairman and Vice Chairman. He thanked the Council for the opportunity to serve as Chairman during the previous year.

Elect Chairman and Vice Chairman for the coming year 2026-27

Chairman McFarland opened nominations for Chairman. Mrs. Ezernack and Ms. Woods nominated Mr. Muhammad. Mr. McFarland asked if there were any other nominations, there being none, all unanimously voting in favor: Mr. Verbon Muhammad Sr. was declared Chairman for 2026-2027. (Mr. Harvey absent)

Mr. Muhammad opened nominations for Vice Chairman, Mr. McFarland, nominated Ms. Woods there being no additional nominations, all voting in favor: Ms. Juanita Woods was declared Vice Chairman for 2026-2027 (Mr. Harvey absent)

Chairman Muhammad thanked the Council for its vote of confidence and expressed his commitment to working collaboratively with the Mayor, Council, and administration. He identified priorities including infrastructure improvements, economic development, crime prevention, and affordable housing, emphasizing the importance of cooperation to move the City forward.

Ms. Woods expressed appreciation for her election as Vice Chairman and pledged to support the Chairman while working cooperatively with both the Council and administration. She stated that continued progress would require mutual cooperation and compromise.

Preliminary Agenda Matters:

Chairman Muhammad explained the meeting was intended to encourage citizen participation and stated he did not plan to impose a strict speaking limit as long as comments remained relevant to the agenda. However, he reserved the authority to ask speakers to conclude their remarks when appropriate and announced that citizen participation would generally allow up to four minutes per speaker.

Mr. Creekbaum stated it's enshrined. (3 minutes in Rules & Regulations Resolution)

Chairman Muhammad further clarified while the standard speaking time would generally remain three minutes, he may allow additional time when appropriate. He also asked everyone addressing the Council to direct their comments through the Chair rather than speaking directly to individual council members, emphasizing that doing so would promote a more orderly and respectful meeting.

Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland, the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of June 23, 2026, were approved. (Mrs. Ezernack abstained) (No comments from the public)

VI: Presentation:

Mr. Tank Smith thanked the Council for its continued support of the Massey Miracle Runners. He encouraged young athletes to remain disciplined, persevere through challenges, learn from mistakes, and continue striving for success while expressing appreciation to parents, coaches, and the community.

Mr. Detrick Massey thanked the City, Council, and staff for supporting the Massey Miracle Runners. She announced plans to pursue another championship event in 2027 and expressed appreciation to those who helped make the recent event successful.

Malcolm Gay, special recognition and appreciation, Representing USA Track & Field commended the City of Monroe, volunteers, and the Massey Miracle Runners organization for hosting a well-organized championship event. He praised the professionalism, hospitality, communication, security, and overall experience provided to athletes and spectators.

Ms. Massey stated the success of the Massey Miracle Runners benefits the entire City of Monroe and presented championship rings to Mayor Ellis and the Monroe City Council in appreciation of their support.

VII: Proposed Condemnations:

1. 110 Memorial Dr (D5)- Owners: Danny W. Robinson.
Upon motion of Chairman Muhammad, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the structure. (No comments from the public)

Mr. Tommy James (Code Enforcement) stated it's a dilapidated structure and it's becoming a nuisance and we're asking that you condemn it and give the property only 30 days to bring into compliance.

2. 602 Wilson St (D4)- Owner: Christine C. White & Pearlie Irby (Tax)
Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved, the building was condemned, and the property owner given 30 days to bring the structure into compliance with the Code or demolish the structure.

Pearlie Irby requested additional time to contact the property owner and determine whether the property could be restored and returned to productive use before condemnation proceedings moved forward.

Chairman Muhammad asked Mr. James had he been in contact with the owner.

Mr. James stated he had been unable to contact the property owner and reiterated that the structure remained dilapidated and a nuisance. He recommended allowing 30 days for the property to be brought into compliance.

Mr. Creekbaum explained Ms. Irby brought at a tax sale interest in the property rather than full ownership. He stated that ownership rights could change over time in accordance with applicable tax sale laws.

Chairman Muhammad stated 30 days would be allowed for contact with the owner and for the property to be brought into compliance with City code. He further inquired about additional enforcement efforts to address illegal dumping around overgrown and vacant properties.

Mr. James advised that fines for illegal dumping and littering have increased to $1,500 and stated Code Enforcement would begin issuing citations more proactively when violations are observed.

Chairman Muhammad encouraged residents to report illegal dumping and reminded the public that reporting violations is important to improving neighborhood conditions.

Mrs. Ezernack asked whether information regarding the increased fines could be shared through local media.

Mr. James stated efforts were underway to publicize the increased fines and educate residents about the updated enforcement measures.

VIII: Veto Override:

Chairman Muhammad open the Public Hearing

(a) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland, an Ordinance No. 12,300 annexing approximately ±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 was denied, and veto upheld. (Mrs. Ezernack voted nay) (Mr. Harvey absent)

Patricia Turner, 315 Marshall Dr, requested clarification regarding the ordinance being considered under the veto override agenda item.

Mr. Creekbaum explained the veto override process, stating the ordinance had previously been adopted by the Council and later vetoed by the Mayor. He noted this meeting represents the Council's final opportunity to override the veto by the required supermajority vote.

Donnie Bright, 119 Anita Dr., expressed concerns about the proposed annexation, stating the residents had only recently received information and believed the project lacked sufficient clarity. He stated his opposition based on concerns regarding the proposed development.

Gloria Clark, 100 Anita Dr, stated she had recently learned of the project and expressed opposition to the proposed annexation, asking the Council to reconsider.

Daphne Hamilton, 104 Wesley St., stated she has lived in the Green Acres community for many years and voiced her opposition to the proposed project.

Sheridan Hamilton, 104 Wesley St., stated the plans for the property remained unclear and expressed opposition until additional information regarding the development is provided.

There were further opposition as follows; Ivori Washington Johnson, 5410 Jackson St., Eric Payne, 109 Wesley St., and Artis Wilson, 106 Freddie St.

Charles Theus, 503 Speed Ave, the developer, described the proposed residential development, explaining that it would provide quality housing designed to meet a community need while contributing positively to Monroe's housing inventory.

Chairman Muhammad acknowledged the concerns raised by residents and explained the proposal had completed the Planning and Zoning review process. He apologized to anyone who did not receive earlier notification.

Mr. Creekbaum stated the required Planning and Zoning notifications had been provided and explained City ordinances do not require additional notification before Council consideration.

Mr. McFarland thanked residents for attending and encouraged them not to rely on misinformation. He clarified the proposal involved single-family homes rather than apartments or rental housing and stated he would support the recommendation of the Council representative for the district.

Mrs. Ezernack stated additional information was needed regarding infrastructure responsibilities and developer commitments before she could support the proposal. She encouraged the developer to return with more detailed plans addressing those concerns.

Ms. Woods stated she believed the proposed development would increase surrounding property values, expand the City's tax base, and encourage future investment in South Monroe. She emphasized the proposal involved annexation of underutilized property and expressed support for responsible growth while acknowledging residents' concerns.

Mrs. Ezernack stated misinformation can spread quickly during proposed developments, particularly among nearby property owners. She encouraged open communication between residents, developers, and the city so everyone clearly understands the project's purpose, each party's responsibilities, and the overall development process before conclusions are reached.

Mr. McFarland stated inaccurate information had circulated regarding the proposed development. He noted the council had previously supported a similar annexation initiated by the mayor and expressed concern that the current project was being viewed differently despite having comparable circumstances. He emphasized the importance of supporting responsible development and continued investment on the south side of Monroe.

Public hearing was closed and Ordinance was read for finalization

Roosevelt Wright, 2406 Oak St., Mr. Wright stated the council had previously approved a similar annexation despite incomplete infrastructure and questioned why different standards appeared to be applied to the current proposal. He requested consistency and transparency in the council's decision-making process.

Mrs. Ezernack clarified that her concern centered on ensuring the streets were brought up to city code and stated the developer would be responsible for completing the required improvements, on that note, the Chairman called for the vote.

IX: <u>RESOLUTIONS AND ORDNIANCE FOR SECOND READING AND FINAL ADOPTION AND SUBJECT TO PUBLIC HEARING:</u>

Chairman Muhammad open the Public Hearing (a)Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland, and approved Ordinance No. 12,302 proposing an amendment to the Home Rule Charter of the City of Monroe, Louisiana, to amend Section 2-13 (c) (Submission of Ordinance 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. (Mrs. Ezernack nay) (Mr. Harvey absent)

Brenda Joyce Williams, 502 Carlton Ave., opposed the charter amendment, stating that the existing balance of power between the mayor and council should remain in place. She expressed concern that reducing the votes required to override a veto would weaken governmental checks and balances.

Roosevelt Wright, 2406 Oak St, reviewed the intent of Monroe's charter, explaining it established a strong-mayor form of government while providing the council with significant legislative authority. He encouraged preserving that balance.

Charles Theus, 503 Speed Ave., supported the amendment, stating it would help remove obstacles to economic development and encourage investment, particularly in south Monroe.

Patricia Turner, 315 Marshall Dr., urged the council to keep the current charter provisions, stating the existing system promotes accountability, discussion, and balanced government.

Ms. Woods explained the amendment was intended to improve the council's ability to move important matters forward when governmental impasses occur while continuing to represent the interests of Monroe residents.

Public hearing was closed and Ordinance was read for finalization.

Mr. McFarland shared differing opinions regarding the charter amendment, with comments reflecting both support for the existing charter and support for modifying the veto process.

Mrs. Ezernack stated she supports maintaining the current system of checks and balances established by the City's governing structure. She expressed concerns that reducing the mayor's veto authority would weaken that balance and alter the responsibilities assigned to both the Council and the Mayor. She emphasized each branch has a distinct role, noting that the Council controls the legislative agenda while the Mayor has veto authority. Based on those principles, she stated she could not support the proposed ordinance.

Chairman Muhammad stated this is coming out of frustration because they get to an impasse where they sometimes can't get anything through. He really thinks administration, mayor and the council must work together. He does believe that must happen. They have a situation where they just had impasse and maybe they can remove the override veto so they can get some things through. These are some things you come up with when you become frustrated.

Chairman Muhammad opened the Public Hearing

(b) Upon motion Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland and approved Ordinance No. 12,303 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. (No comments from the public) (Mrs. Ezernack nay) (Mr. Harvey absent)

Public hearing was closed and Ordinance was read for finalization.

Mrs. Ezernack stated current city policies already prohibit discrimination and harassment and therefore she could not support the proposed ordinance.

Ms. Woods explained the ordinance would provide another level of oversight to help ensure employee and citizen concerns are reviewed fairly and addressed in a timely manner.

Mr. McFarland stated while city policies exist, they are not always consistently enforced. He explained the proposed ordinance would strengthen accountability by making compliance a legal requirement rather than relying solely on policy. Although he could not discuss specific personnel matters publicly, he stated concerns brought to his attention demonstrated the need for additional safeguards and greater transparency.

X: <u>RESOLUTION AND MINUTE ENTRIES:</u>

1. Council:

(a)Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9157 authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with S.O.S Pets of Ouachita and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(b)Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9158 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to Isaac King- Justa Cowboy Rodeo Association for the Bayou Black Open Rodeo and Tailgating pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 d (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect there to. (No comments from the public)

(c)Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9159 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to Zach Randall, Reaper Boat Works, LLC (Reaper Fest Musical Festival) pursuant to Monroe City Cod Sec 12-231 d (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

2. Mayor's Office:

(a)Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9160 authorizing a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Isaac King d/b/a Justa Cowboy Association and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(b)Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9161 approving a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the General Claire L. Chennault Foundation, Inc for the Hot Air Balloon Festival. (No comments from the public)

Mr. Creekbaum informed the council that Ms. Calloway was unable to attend the meeting but wished to express her appreciation to the council for its continued support. He noted she conveyed her sincere gratitude on behalf of the organization.

(c)Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No 9162 authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Reaper Boats, LLC and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(d)Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack, and unanimously approved to remove Resolution authorizing a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Ouachita Green and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

Ms. Woods asked why the item was being removed.

Mr. Creekbaum stated Ouachita Green hasn't fully reviewed the agreement.

3. Department of Administration

(a)Upon motion by Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack, and unanimously approved to consider an Application by Walia, LLC dba Sip N Smoke, 1304 Sterlington Rd., 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) (No comments from the public)

4. Public Works Department:

(a)Upon motion by Mr. McFarland, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved Resolution No 9163 accepting the bid of Lemoine Company, LLC for the Wpcc Fine Bar Screens Replacement Project and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

XI: INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTION & ORDINANCES:

(a)Upon motion by Mr. McFarland, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance declaring certain immovable property located at 911 Orange Street, Monroe, Louisiana, to be no longer needed for a public purpose or public use, authorizing the sale of said property to Eta Delta Lambda Chapter Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Educational Foundation, Inc. pursuant to Louisiana Revised Statute 33:4712, and otherwise providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Ernest Muhammad, 1013 Griffin St, on behalf of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and the Alpha Eta Delta Lambda Chapter Foundation, thanked the City Council for supporting the transfer of the property. He explained the organization has provided scholarships and educational opportunities for local youth for many years and intends to use the property as a permanent location to expand community programs and continue serving future generations.

Ms. Woods thanked Alpha Phi Alpha for investing in the property, noting that it had become an eyesore. She expressed appreciation for the organization's commitment to improving the community and supporting local youth, while also recognizing Dr. Rodney Welch for his contributions.

Mr. McFarland thanked the organization for its investment in the property located in his district. He expressed hope that the project would move forward successfully and stated the renovated building would provide lasting benefits for children, young people, and the surrounding community.

(b)Upon motion by Mr. McFarland, seconded by Ms. Ezernack and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of and sell to Tez Washington all rights, title, and interest that the city may have acquired to lot twelve (12) of block six (6) of Renwick's Additional bearing municipal address 303 S 23rd St., Ouachita Parish, district 3 Monroe, La., by adjudication at tax sale dated June 8, 2005, and further providing with respect thereto.

XII: CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Lester Paster, 301 S Pointe Dr, revisited concerns he had raised at a previous meeting regarding a Court of Appeal matter and directed those in attendance to his website, requesting that city officials address the issues he believes remain unresolved.

Brenda Joyce Williams, 502 Carlton Ave, urged the Council to prioritize revitalizing existing neighborhoods before pursuing new developments. She encouraged investment in vacant properties, infrastructure improvements, code enforcement, and partnerships to strengthen established communities, particularly in District 4.

Patricia Turner, 315 Marshall Dr., encouraged council members to demonstrate progress through visible neighborhood improvements and emphasized the importance of leadership, collaboration, planning, and consistent action to improve existing communities.

Mondrain Douglas, 2300 Jackson St., congratulated Chairman Muhammad on his election and stated she would continue supporting and following the work of the Council throughout the chairman's term.

JD Bennett, 607 Delouche St, shared concerns regarding a property tax issue, explaining that he had not received notice before ownership of his home changed through a tax sale.

XIII: COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mrs. Ezernack welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for participating in the meeting.

Ms. Woods – **Vice Chairman** thanked the citizens for attending and participating, stating that their involvement demonstrates an interest in strengthening the community.

Mr. McFarland expressed appreciation to J.B. Bennett for the support and kindness he showed him early in his career, recalling that Mr. Bennett provided assistance during difficult times. He complimented Mr. Bennett on his health and appearance and asked him to share his age with those in attendance. After learning that Mr. Bennett was 91 years old, Mr. McFarland thanked him again for his years of service and support. Mr. McFarland then responded to public comments by explaining the Council must follow established legal procedures for code enforcement and demolitions. He emphasized department heads reports to the mayor, encouraged respectful dialogue, praised city staff for their work, requested written updates regarding ongoing concerns, and reaffirmed his commitment to supporting all council districts while working collaboratively with fellow officials.

Mayor Friday Ellis congratulated Chairman Verbon Muhammad on his election as Council Chairman and expressed his commitment to maintaining a productive working relationship with the Council. He stated many of the Council's priorities align with the administration's goals and that he looks forward to continued collaboration. Mayor Ellis thanked residents for their confidence and support while encouraging the community to continue supporting the Masur Museum, local artists, and cultural institutions. He recognized City employees, especially sanitation crews, for their dedication and discussed recent investments in improved equipment and uniforms to enhance efficiency and safety. He highlighted workforce and economic development opportunities associated with the Meta project, encouraging residents to pursue training, scholarships, and employment through state and local workforce partners. He noted that Meta investment is generating substantial opportunities for Louisiana contractors, local businesses, and Monroe residents seeking employment. Mayor Ellis discussed the administration's continued investment in infrastructure projects, including roads, water systems, and other capital improvements throughout the city.

He acknowledged that disagreements between the administration and Council may occur but emphasized that respectful communication and cooperation are necessary to continue moving Monroe forward. He concluded by reaffirming his commitment to serving the citizens of Monroe and working alongside the Council to improve the quality of life for the community.

Mr. Muhammad – **Chairman** encouraged each council member to identify projects for their districts so they can work together with the Mayor to move them forward. He emphasized fairness, equity, and collaboration while reminding residents to report missing stop signs, street signs, and malfunctioning streetlights so the City can address public safety concerns more efficiently.

There being no further business to come before the council, Chairman Muhammad adjourned the meeting at 8:28PM.

<u>Verbon Muhammad Sr.</u>
Chairman

<u>Carolus S. Riley</u>
Council Clerk

<u>Erica L. Moore</u>
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.