City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
July 28, 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.

Chairman Muhammad called the meeting to order, he then asked the clerk to call roll.

There present: Ms. Woods, Mrs. Ezernack, Mr. McFarland, Mr. Harvey, and Mr. Muhammad

Chairman Muhammad announced a quorum was present, and the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Pastor Fee Strickland, Senior Pastor Mt. Pleasant MBC.

Upon motion of Mr. Muhammad, seconded by Ms. Woods, the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of July 14, 2026, were approved. (Mr. Harvey abstained) (No comments from the public)

Proposed Condemnations:

1. 4200 Gayton St (D3) – Owner: Dorothy R. Jackson
Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland 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 that burned in February of 2025, and it's becoming a nuisance and we're asking that you condemn it and give the property owner 30 days to bring into compliance.

VIII: Resolutions and Minute Entries:

Council:

(a) Upon motion Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9164, authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Choices Mentoring for Families and Youth and further providing with respect thereto.

Chad Ali, 302 S Point, thanked the City Council and Mayor for their continued support of Choices Mentoring and neighborhood revitalization. He described partnerships that transform abandoned properties into community gardens while mentoring youth through landscaping, greenhouse construction, and neighborhood improvement projects. He stated these efforts will continue to expand with the City's support.

Mrs. Ezernack thanked Mr. Ali for his dedication to the project and for the positive impact his work is making in the community.

(b) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Ms. Woods, and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9165 granting an exception to the Open container Ordinance to the Twin City Art Foundation for an Exhibition, Grounds for Departure: A Historic House, An Art Museum at the Masur Museum of Art pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 d. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(c) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9166 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance for the Louisiana Municipal Association Block Party pursuant to Monroe City Code Section 12-231 (d), authorizing associated street closures, and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

Legal Department:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9167 authorizing the city retain Fishman Haygood, LLP for legal services relating to claims arising from the purchase of fire apparatus and further providing with respect thereto.

Ms. Woods asked whether the legal services agreement under consideration involved the former Governor.

Governor John Bel Edwards, Former Governor for the State of Louisiana, explained his law firm was seeking authorization to represent the City in potential antitrust litigation involving fire truck purchases. He stated manufacturers allegedly engaged in price-fixing and market collusion, resulting in inflated costs and lengthy delivery times for fire apparatus.

Ms. Wood thanked Former Governor Edwards for his presentation.

Former Governor Edwards expressed appreciation to the Council for its public service and thanked members for their work on behalf of the community.

Mayor Friday Ellis thanked Former Governor Edwards for personally checking on Monroe during the recent ice storm. He expressed appreciation for the Governor's willingness to help and ensure the City's needs were being addressed during the emergency.

Engineering Services:

(a) Upon substitute motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved to remove resolution authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Master Professional Services Agreement with Lazenby & Associates, Inc. for engineering, surveying, and related professional services, and further providing with respect thereto. (deferred until the first meeting in August)

Ms. Woods requested consideration of agreements be removed to review the documents more thoroughly before acting.

Mr. Creekbaum explained the agreements establish general contractual terms with engineering firms, while each individual project would still require a separate task order detailing the scope of work, compensation, and project-specific requirements.

Ms. Woods asked whether projects completed under the master service agreements would return to the Council for approval or proceed administratively once the agreements were authorized.

Mr. Creekbaum explained whether the matter returns to the Council or it depends on the nature of the project. Work already authorized through the budget or prior Council action may proceed under an existing agreement, while new or previously unauthorized projects would require Council approval.

Ms. Woods asked whether the previous engineering contracts had been in effect for five years.

Mr. Creekbaum confirmed that they had.

Ms. Woods expressed concern about extending engineering services while litigation involving the I-20 Board and the City remained pending. She requested additional time for discussion and moved to remove the item from the agenda until the next meeting.

Mr. Creekbaum advised a substitute motion could be made to postpone the item.

Ms. Woods formally moved to remove the item from the agenda and place it on the next meeting's agenda.

Mr. Creekbaum explained the parliamentary procedure required for considering the substitute motion.

Chairman Muhammad requested clarification of the motion.

Ms. Woods stated her motion was to defer the item until the first meeting in August to allow additional discussion.

Mr. Harvey requested clarification regarding the reason for postponing the item.

Ms. Woods explained her concern was the potential legal implications of the pending litigation, not a lack of preparation.

Chairman Muhammad acknowledged a motion to remove the item from the agenda was before the Council.

Mrs. Ezernack asked whether delaying the item would negatively affect ongoing work.

Mr. McCallister (City Engineer) explained delaying approval would postpone new work but noted current projects and existing contracts would continue uninterrupted.

Ms. Woods asked whether the current contract expired at the end of the month.

Mr. McCalister confirmed that it is.

Mr. Creekbaum clarified that previously approved task orders would remain valid under the existing contract and would not be affected by a short delay.

Ms. Woods emphasized she was only requesting a brief postponement to allow further discussion.

Mr. McFarland stated a two-week delay would not jeopardize the project and supported taking additional time to review the matter.

Chairman Muhammad called for the vote

Mr. Creekbaum explained the voting procedure for the substitute motion.

Mr. McFarland questioned the parliamentary procedure regarding the substitute motion.

Mr. Creekbaum stated his understanding that adoption of the substitute motion would replace the original motion.

Mr. McFarland stated if the substitute motion passed, the original motion would no longer be considered.

(b) Upon substitute motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved to remove resolution authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Master Professional Services Agreement with S. E. Huey Co. for engineering, surveying, and related professional services, and further providing with respect thereto. (deferred until the first meeting in August)

Ms. Woods requested the related agreements be postponed together because both expired at the end of the month.

(c) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9168 authorizing a Traffic Signal Maintenance Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027. (No comments from the public)

(d) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9169 approving Task Order 26sew002 between the City of Monroe and Waggoner Engineering, Inc. for the WPCC Influent Pumps No. 3 & 4 and Effluent Pumps No. 3 & 4 Replacement Project. (No comments from the public)

(e) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9170 approving Task Order 26sew001 between the City of Monroe and Waggoner Engineering, Inc. for the WPCC Influent and Effluent Pump Station Valve Replacement Project. (No comments from the public)

IX: Introduction of Resolutions & Ordinance:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance adopting the Authorized Millage Rates(s) and providing for the Levying of Special and General Taxes for the City of Monroe for the year 2025 and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Creekbaum noted a typographical error in the ordinance title, stating the year should read 2026 instead of 2025.

Ms. Patricia Turner, 315 Marshall Dr., requested clarification regarding the millage ordinance and asked whether it would increase taxes or affect residents financially.

Mr. Richard Moore explained the proposed millage rate remained unchanged and would not increase property taxes.

Ms. Turner asked why the ordinance was being presented at this time and whether there had been any delay.

Mr. Creekbaum explained that state law requires the ordinance to be adopted annually.

(b) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance amending the City of Monroe Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 to appropriate funds for cancer screening for fire service employees and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(c) Upon motion of Ms. Woods, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of and sell to Linda Faye Rucks all rights, title and interest that the city may have acquired to Lot Six (6), Squar fifty-five (55), Unit 10, Booker T. Washington Addition, 4010 Pippin St., Ouachita Parish, District 3, Monroe, La, by adjudication at tax sale dated July 25th 1996, and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(d) Upon motion of McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to introduce an Ordinance authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of and sell to Erica Thomas and Horace Wilson all rights, title, and interest that the City may have acquired to south 70', Lot Seven (7) & south 70', of west 10' of Lot Eight (8), Square 7, Bryant's south Highland Addition (no municipal address) Marx St., Ouachita Parish, District 5, Monroe, La, by adjudication at tax sale dated July 13th 1999, and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

X: Resolutions and Ordinances for Second Reading and Final Adoption and Subject to Public Hearing:

Chairman Muhammad opened the Public Hearing, Public hearing was closed and Ordinance was read for finalization.

(a) Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,304 authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of and sell o Tez Washington all rights, title, and interest that the city may have acquired to lo twelve (12) of block six (6) of Renwick's Addition 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. (No comments from the public)

XI: Citizens Participation:

Lester Paster, 100 S. Point Dr. Apt 301, reiterated concerns regarding a Court of Appeal order that he believes has not been carried out. He asked the Council Chairman to consider requesting an investigation and referenced information available on his website.

Patricia Turner, 315 Marshall Drive, expressed concerns about overgrown grass and neglected properties in Districts 4 and 5. While she appreciated staff visiting the area, she requested a timeline for when mowing and cleanup would occur.

Chairman Muhammad acknowledged the complaints regarding high grass, stating he had discussed the issue with the Mayor and recognized it as an ongoing concern that required additional attention.

Mayor Ellis acknowledged that grass maintenance had fallen behind because of a prolonged wet season. He explained that Public Works was reorganizing crews and equipment to improve efficiency and stated the City was working to catch up on mowing operations.

Ms. Turner noted that Mr. McCallister had toured the affected area with her and asked when residents could expect service.

Mayor Ellis stated staff would provide Ms. Turner with the appropriate contact person and an estimated timeline after the meeting.

Ms. Turner added that when she calls City offices she is often directed to voicemail rather than speaking with staff.

Brenda Joyce Williams, 502 Carlton Ave, Ms. Williams urged the Council to treat neighborhood improvements as a priority and emphasized that timely action on community projects is important. She encouraged officials to focus on results and avoid unnecessary delays.

Vern Hall, 1007 Thomas Ave, requested action to address drainage issues in a canal ditch, citing stagnant water, mosquito concerns, and declining property values. He asked the City to work toward a permanent solution.

Chairman Muhammad assured Mr. Hall the concerns would be followed up on with City staff and requested an update regarding mosquito abatement efforts.

Mr. McCallister explained the drainage issue involves coordination with the parish. He stated the City had completed its responsibilities and would forward the concerns again in an effort to move the project forward.

Ms. Roberson informed the Council that the Northeast Louisiana Chamber of Commerce will host its annual Back-to-School Drive on August 15 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Macedonia Life Center. She stated that approximately 500 backpacks would be distributed to students and that numerous community vendors would participate. Ms. Roberson encouraged Council Members to attend, even briefly, to greet students, offer encouragement as they begin the school year, and help strengthen civic awareness and engagement among Monroe's youth.

The Chairman moved back to Communications & Special Announcements due to inadvertently skipping over it.

III. Communications & Special Announcements

Mayor Friday Ellis highlighted several recent community activities and partnerships, including the Teachers Symposium, where he recognized local educators and organizers for their dedication to education. He commended the Compassion Center for its ongoing efforts to provide food, clothing, and other assistance to families in need while praising the volunteers who support those programs. He also recognized Monroe Zoo employees during National Zookeeper Week and thanked them for their service to the community. The Mayor discussed ongoing street improvement projects throughout the city, explaining that temporary road closures, milling, and patchwork are necessary phases before final paving is completed. He encouraged residents to remain patient, drive cautiously through construction zones, support local attractions and organizations, and continue working together to improve Monroe's quality of life through collaboration and community involvement.

Ms. Woods – **Vice Chairwoman** expressed appreciation to Mr. McCallister, his staff, Mr. Jones, and city employees for their continued work on community improvement projects despite challenging summer heat. She thanked Mayor Ellis for his leadership and communication regarding ongoing projects and highlighted improvements being made at the Community Center, including upgraded parking, improved accessibility, sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping. She acknowledged residents' eagerness to see visible progress and explained that project implementation is handled through the administration, while the Council provides oversight. Ms. Woods stated that Mr. McCallister advised the Community Center project should be completed within approximately 90 days, after which a public unveiling and renaming ceremony would be held. She concluded by thanking everyone involved and stated that the public would continue to receive updates as the project progresses.

Mr. McFarland expressed appreciation to former Governor John Bel Edwards for appointing him to the Louisiana Funeral Directors and Embalmers State Board, where he served for eight years. He stated while residents often focus on visible issues such as overgrown properties, abandoned structures, and neighborhood concerns, many of those matters have already been addressed or are currently moving through the required legal and administrative processes. He explained that council members cannot direct city staff, as those responsibilities rest with the mayor and department heads. Mr. McFarland noted that funding had previously been identified for demolition projects, including the former nursing home and other nuisance properties, but legal and ownership issues delayed progress. He also discussed ongoing infrastructure improvements, including Lock Drive and drainage concerns, and stated reports would be requested regarding canal maintenance and the beaver dam issue. He encouraged residents to recognize the work completed over the past two years, offered to personally tour neighborhoods with constituents to review concerns, and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to addressing blight and improving neighborhoods through the proper legal process.

Mr. Muhammad- **Chairman** encouraged residents to continue reporting missing street signs, stop signs, and malfunctioning streetlights so repairs could be completed promptly. He noted several repairs had already been made following reports received after the previous council meeting. He also shared concerns raised by citizens regarding the availability of cooling stations during periods of extreme heat and stated that the matter could be explored further as a potential community resource.

Mayor Ellis explained the City coordinates cooling assistance efforts each year in partnership with the Salvation Army and local recreation centers. He stated recreation centers are available as cooling locations where residents may escape the heat, charge electronic devices, and receive assistance when needed. He

added that city staff have responded to calls from senior citizens during periods of excessive heat and encouraged the public to help direct vulnerable residents to available cooling resources.

There being no further business to come before the council, Chairman Muhammad adjourned the meeting at 7:05PM.

Verbon Muhammad Sr.
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.