City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
August 11, 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: Mrs. Ezernack, Mr. McFarland, Mr. Harvey, and Mr. Muhammad

There absent: Ms. Woods

Chairman Muhammad announced a quorum was present, and the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Troy Lizenby and Council Douglas Harvey

III. Communications & Special Announcements:

Mayor Friday Ellis highlighted Monroe's hosting of the Louisiana Municipal Association's 89th annual celebration, noting that officials from communities across Louisiana traveled to Monroe and the event received strong coverage. He also discussed a well-attended community meeting with transportation and smart-growth representatives regarding Amtrak progress, including advancement of the corridor project and plans for Monroe to be a stop on the Atlanta-to-Dallas route. He recognized the City's AT&T; Fiber public-private partnership and the economic-development recognition it has received, explaining that Monroe's broadband work is being used as a model for other communities. He said the City's efforts have also led to invitations to discuss broadband solutions at events such as South by Southwest. Mayor Ellis praised the positive statewide feedback about Monroe's hospitality during the LMA gathering and thanked City employees for their hard work. He also recognized Monroe's participation in the America 250 celebration and the Chamber of Commerce's Top 20 Under 40 program, praising the young professionals who contribute both professionally and within the community.

Mrs. Ezernack welcomed those in attendance and thanked City employees, volunteers, and everyone who helped make the LMA convention successful. She stated that the event was exceptionally well organized and that employees completed numerous tasks despite the difficulty involved. She also noted that Public Works had delayed some routine calls to focus on convention-related responsibilities and expected those other service matters to be addressed afterward.

Mr. McFarland echoed the praise for the LMA convention, describing it as an outstanding event in Monroe. He congratulated and thanked everyone whose work helped make the convention both enjoyable and educational.

Mr. Muhammad – **Chairman** thanked Civic Center staff, Community Affairs, Public Works, volunteers, and others who helped make the recent event successful. He announced several upcoming community activities, including the 8th Annual Community Health and Wellness Expo at the Civic Center, a Northeast Louisiana Chamber of Commerce event at Macedonia Baptist Church and Family Life Center, and the Turpin Back to School event in Trichell, which was expected to include free haircuts and backpack giveaways. He also recognized AT&T; and United Way for providing 50 laptops to children at the Henrietta Johnson Community Center. He asked residents to report missing street signs, stop signs, and streetlight outages, noting that replacement work was underway in Bryant's Addition. He announced the 5th Annual Bayou Black Open Rodeo at the Monroe Civic Center. He informed residents in the 12th Street, Crescent Drive, Dawn View, and Sunset areas that the City was working to correct reported low water pressure.

IV: Approve Minutes of the Legal & Regular Session of July 28, 2026:

Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack, the minutes of the Legal and Regular Session of July 28, 2026, were unanimously approved. (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. 12,300 and returned it to the Council on July 27, 2026, at 11:21 am. The Mayor's veto, along with his veto messages, was delivered to the Council on July 27, 2026, at 11:43 am. The veto and veto message for the Ordinance will be maintained in the Council records.)

IX: Resolutions and Minute Entries:

Council:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9171 authorizing the City of Monroe to enter into a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Northeast Louisiana Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

Legal:

(a) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9172 authorizing an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Monroe City School Board for the construction and maintenance of ADA-Compliant sidewalks, curb ramps, and related pedestrian improvements.

Mr. McFarland questioned what fund the project was coming out of.

Mr. Morgan McCallister, COO, explained the project would be funded through DOTD and Capital Infrastructure Tax/Commission funding. He stated approximately 59.6% would come from DOTD and 40.4% from CIT, with the overall project estimated at approximately $513,000 to $514,000.

Mr. McFarland asked for clarification that the City's portion was coming from the 1% tax and requested the exact amount being used so the public would clearly understand the City's financial contribution.

Mr. McCallister stated $207,800 of the project cost would come from that funding source.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, clarified the item before the Council concerned an agreement with the Monroe City School Board. He explained the underlying sidewalk project had been approved several years earlier as part of a DOTD grant, but a portion of the project crosses School Board property, requiring an agreement allowing the City to construct that section of sidewalk.

Mr. McCallister stated the project had been in development for a couple of years and offered to provide a date. Mr. McFarland asked if a portion was still coming out of our funds. Mr. Creekbaum answered yes.

(b) Upon motion of McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved as amended Resolution No. 9173authorizing an intergovernmental Agreement with the Monroe City School Board for the joint funding, construction, and maintenance of a sidewalk at Carver Elementary School.

Mr. McFarland asked that the dollar amount for the project be provided so the public would know the cost.

Mr. McCallister explained the project, requested by Councilman Muhammad, involves approximately 511 feet of five-foot concrete sidewalk and is estimated to cost about $18,000. He stated the cost would be divided equally between the Monroe City School Board and the City.

Mr. McFarland’s concern was the lack of a clear answer regarding the funding source. He noted Council members have discretionary funds but said it remained unclear whether the money would come from CIT or a discretionary account. He stressed the matter was a Council decision, not solely a Chairman's decision.

Chairman Muhammad stated he preferred the City's approximately $9,000 share of the Carver sidewalk project to come from Capital Infrastructure funding. For the sidewalk project, he wanted the School Board to pay 50 percent and preferred Capital Infrastructure to cover the City's share.

Mr. Creekbaum explained the Chairman directed the matter to be placed on the agenda. He noted although questions were being directed to Mr. McCallister as engineer, the Chairman had instructed that the agreement be drafted, submitted to the School Board, and placed before the Council.

Mr. McCallister stated he participates in project decision-making and provides technical answers, but the Chairman does not have authority to direct CIT expenditures without Council involvement.

Mr. Harvey stated the Council could either remove the item from the agenda or proceed with an up-or-down vote.

Mr. McCallister said the funding source could be discussed openly. Based on the Chairman's preference, he said Capital Infrastructure could pay the City's approximately $9,000 share instead of using discretionary funds.

Mr. McFarland asked whether Mr. McCallister could make that funding decision without Council approval.

Mr. McCallister responded he was working within an already-approved Council Capital Infrastructure budget and was not independently dictating anyone's budget.

The Council voted on the amended motion.

Mayor’s Office

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved as amended Resolution No. 9174 authorizing the termination of the city's Professional Service Agreement with Kinetix Technologies and authorizing the City to enter into a General Service Agreement with Undercurrent- the firm for marketing, communications, creative, and website service, and further providing with respect thereto.

Kenya Roberson asked why the City was terminating services with Kinetix Technology and requested identification of the owners of both Kinetix and Undercurrent.

Mayor Ellis explained Kinetix had undergone a merger or ownership change and several employees closely associated with Monroe left and formed Undercurrent. He stated the City wanted more unified communication across departments and agencies and believed the former Kinetix team could continue providing that service through their new company, Undercurrent.

Roy Heatherly, Undercurrent, 1205 Frenchmen Bend Rd, said he was pleased to return before the Council and praised Monroe's recent LMA conference. He described his long working relationship with the City and the Monroe Chamber of Commerce, including work with Liz Pyle. He recalled helping the Chamber with its vision and website, initially providing substantial assistance at little or no cost before entering into a formal contract.

Liz Pyle, Undercurrent, 467 Randy Road, West Monroe, said she was available to answer questions and explained she had worked with the City since approximately 2016-2017, including under Mayor Mayo. She acknowledged Mayor Ellis previously chose to terminate their former arrangement, but said the current work is focused on helping Monroe move forward. She also noted the new agreement includes provisions specifically covering City Council services that were not clearly included in the prior Kinetix agreement. Ms. Pyle explained by April 2027, government entities serving populations under 50,000 must make website content fully ADA compliant, including videos, PDFs, and other online materials.

Mr. McFarland said this issue originally arose during his tenure as Chairman. He questioned why the agenda language appeared to change from a professional service agreement to a general service agreement.

Mr. Creekbaum confirmed the reference to a general service agreement was a typographical error and said the item should be amended to read professional service agreement.

Public Work's

(a) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9175 accepting the bid of Hi-Lite Airfield Services, LLC for the Monroe Regional Airport Airfield marking Project and further providing respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

(b) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9176 authorizing the Mayor to accept certain Federal Aviation Administration Grants offers for the Monroe Regional Airport through December 31, 2026, and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Charles Butcher, Airport Director, stated these items authorize the mayor to sign the grants after for the city that goes for the next one too.

(c) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 9177 authorizing the Mayor to execute certain agreements and documents with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Office of Multimodal Commerce, relating to the Monroe Regional Airport, and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public)

Engineering Services:

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No.9178 approving an Intergovernmental Agreement with the State of Louisiana, Department of Transportation and Development, for a temporary traffic detour associated with the Kansas-Garrett Interchange Project.

Chairman Muhammad asked Mr. McCallister to explain this project.

Mr. McCallister explained the detour is an early step in advancing the Garrett Road Interchange project. Utility relocations, airport-lighting-related work, and land issues have already been addressed. Rather than closing all interchange ramps for four to five years, the City and DOTD plan a phased construction sequence.

Mrs. Ezernack asked when construction was expected to begin.

Mr. McCallister said the estimated construction could begin in approximately one and a half to two years.

Mayor Ellis explained that the Kansas-Garrett project was redesigned from multiple roundabouts to a six-lane connection from 165- to Millhaven, which required additional engineering and delayed progress.

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

Chairman Muhammad opened the Public Hearing

(a) Upon motion of Mrs. Ezernack, seconded by Mr. McFarland and unanimously approving Ordinance No. 12,305 adopting the Authorized Millage Rate(s) and providing for the Levy of Special and General Taxes for the City of Monroe for the year 2026 and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public) Public Hearing was closed and Ordinance was read for finalization.

Chairman Muhammad opened the Public Hearing

(b) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approving Ordinance No. 12,306 amending the City of Monroe Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 to appropriate funds for cancer screenings for fire service employees and further providing with respect thereto. (No comments from the public) Public Hearing was closed and Ordinance was read for finalization

Chairman Muhammad opened the Public Hearing

(c) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,307 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), Square 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) Public Hearing closed and Ordinance was read for finalization

Chairman Muhammad opened the Public Hearing

(d) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mrs. Ezernack and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,308 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. Public Hearing closed and Ordinance was read for finalization

Chairman Muhammad opened the Public Hearing

(e) Upon motion of Mr. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,309 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. Ernst Muhammad, 1013 Griffin St, speaking on behalf of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Mr. Ernest Muhammad thanked the City for allowing the organization to purchase the house for educational purposes. He said the fraternity intends to improve and beautify the property, contribute positively to the neighborhood, and continue serving as a strong presence in the city.

Mr. McFarland praised the fraternity for taking the initiative to turn the facility into a useful asset in District 4.

XII: Citizens Participation:

Brenda Joyce Williams, 502 Carlton Ave, commended the Monroe Police Department and Code Enforcement for coordinating their response to illegal dumping and neighborhood concerns. She encouraged residents to follow the 'see something', say something approach and report problems.

Patricia Turner, 315 Marshall Dr., said she woke up to numerous small yellow utility flags throughout King Oaks near Marshall Drive, and what the markings represented. Ms. Turner also stated she made another call regarding the grass still being untamed on Richwood Rd # 1.

Mayor Ellis said the neighborhood may be preparing for a fiber-optic installation. He explained a service provider working within the public right-of-way could be preparing for boring underground and utility work.

Ms. Turner said she had already made calls and had also spoken with a former student familiar with utility and insurance claims. She said King Oaks is well maintained, and residents take pride in their yards, so she wanted assurance that any disturbed areas would be restored and that residents would not have to struggle with claims after contractors completed the work

Chairman Muhammad stated AT&T laid fiber in West Parkview area, and they must come back and side it out. They would replant your grass if that's affected.

Mr. Harvey explained that utility companies mark underground lines before any digging begins, with yellow marking typically identifying gas line. He stated if construction damages are caused by the company, repairs must be made.

Lester Paster, 100 South Pointe Dr. Apt 301, Mr. Paster again raised a long-standing legal complaint that he said has continued for more than 20 years.

Mr. Creekbaum read into record: I appreciate Mr. Paster coming up to discuss this case. There is an order from the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals that does not get discussed in Mr. Paster's presentation. So, I want to read it. (This is an order from the Louisiana Second Circuit Court of Appeals dated October 13, 2016. The applicant Lester G Paster has filed a motion complaining that his case arising from a 1997 charge for a violation of Louisiana Revised Statute 14401 is not proceeding as ordered by this court's opinion in City of Monroe vs Paster (gives case citation) Whereby this court vacated the applicant's conviction and remanded the matter to the Monroe City Court for new proceedings. Contrary to the applicants' arguments on demand from this court, the prosecutor of the City of Monroe had the authority to dismiss the charge against the applicant. Because the charge has been dismissed, the case is final and the applicant is not entitled to a new trial. Accordingly, the applicants' motion is hereby denied.) Mr. Pastor's case has been final. The charges were dismissed. The Second Circuit recognized over a decade ago. There is no case to be tried in Mr. Paster's case. This is the Court of Appeals order that Mr. Paster complaints have been violated. The Courts of Appeals itself has said is not being violated. The case is over.

Lonnikia Robinson, 2700 Stokes St., thanked the Mayor and City Council on behalf of the Northeast Louisiana Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation for approving the resolution involving the organization. She also thanked the Council for its investment and support of the foundation's important mission.

Kenya Roberson, speaking on behalf of the Northeast Louisiana Chamber of Commerce, applauded the City's work on the Louisiana Municipal Association conference but expressed disappointment that local chamber members were not given an opportunity to provide food or catering services. She asked the Mayor and Council to establish a clearer process for notifying all local chambers and businesses about future contracting opportunities so that more businesses can participate and the economic benefit can be spread throughout the community.

Mayor Ellis clarified that the Louisiana Municipal Association, not the City of Monroe, selected and paid the food vendor for the conference. Mayor Ellis told Ms. Roberson he respected her advocacy and encouraged her to continue communicating about those concerns. He reiterated that LMA rented the City's facility, selected the vendors, conducted the related discussions, and hired the vendor, meaning the City and local chambers did not make that selection.

Mr. McFarland thanked Ms. Roberson and the Mayor for their comments and stated for the record, the Council had no role in selecting the conference vendor. However, he agreed with Ms. Roberson that more local businesses should have had opportunities to participate.

Sonya Jacobs, 700 University, said she was uncomfortable with the tone of an earlier exchange and felt the discussion lacked appropriate decorum and respect. She said elected and administrative leaders should allow each Council member to express a perspective and ask questions without being interrupted. She encouraged the Council to maintain respectful discussion going forward so the public can learn from the deliberations

There being no further business to come before the council, Chairman Muhammad adjourned the meeting at 7:35PM.

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.