

City Hall, Monroe, Louisiana
April 9, 2024
6:00 p.m.

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 Chairman Ezernack, called the meeting to order. She then asked the clerk to call roll.

There were present: Mr. Harvey, Mrs. Ezernack, Ms. Woods, Mr. Marshall, & Mrs. Dawson.

There was absent: None.

Chairman Ezernack announced that a quorum was present, and that the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance would be led by Mr. Harvey or his designee.

The Invocation was led by Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer.

COMMUNICATIONS & SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Harvey noted on Thursday night there will be a meeting for the Garden District, and he said he knows the City talks a lot about traffic in that area. He said the meeting will be held at Grace Episcopal Church at 5:30 p.m. to talk about traffic along North 6th Street and other potential improvements. He said for those who have an interest, he definitely invites you to come.

Ms. Woods said good evening, and she thanked everyone for coming out in the inclement weather. She said the City is praying for everyone's safety and the safety of their family over the next 24 hours as the weather is supposed to intensify. She said take care, be safe, and stay dry.

Mr. Marshall thanked everyone for coming out to the City Council meeting. He said the City had a great pass Saturday with the Autism Walk. He thanked Ms. Shontae Johnson and her crew for putting on the event. He thanked her for supporting Autism and bringing awareness and he said this month is dedicated to Autism. He stated she has been putting on this program for at least the past three years. On another note, he announced the Northeast Delta Human Services Authority (HSA) Art is Therapy Festival will be April 27th downtown at the Rivermarket from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m. He noted Planning and Urban Development will have another meeting about grant funding that is available. He further noted if you missed the first one, the second will be April 17, 2024, at the Public Safety building.

Mrs. Dawson said good evening, and she thanked everyone for being in attendance. She announced the Uno Tournament will be on April 13, 2024, at 5 p.m. at the Henrietta Johnson Community Center and she said for more information call the center at 318-329-2448. She noted last week the City had a great ribbon cutting at Charles Johnson Park for the new basketball mural and it was well attended. She said the City recognized and paid tribute to what she call the GOATs of the City. She said the mural included Mr. Larry Wright, Coach Dale Zimmerman, Ms. Elaine Powell, and Mr. Bill Russell, who was born in the City of Monroe and raised in West Monroe, La. She thanked the artist that did the hard work, and she said the City started this journey probably December of 2022 for artist to submit their resume and work. She said the artists the City chose for this mural were outstanding and their vision was amazing. On another note, she announced the Kid Summer Camp will be June 3rd until July 12th from 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and lunch will be provided. She said all campers must bring a snack, sunscreen, water bottles, and walking shoes and for more information please call 318-329-3394. She noted Love the Boot Week is coming up and she said the City will have a bunch of community clean ups. She said the City would love for the community to be a part of the participation. She further noted it will begin on April 22, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. starting at Emily P. Robinson, at Harvey Benoit Recreation Center April 23, 2024, Henrietta Johnson April 24, 2024, which are all in District 5. She said there are some other districts that will be having the cleanup as well. She stated this weekend Primary Health Services is presenting a health and resource fair at Wossman High School gym from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. She said you can contact Catherine Tonore, CEO, at 318-388-1250 or Courtney McDaniel the Outreach Coordinator. Lastly, she stated she hasn't been at a meeting since the senseless killings that have happened especially outside of

Charles Johnson Park by the zoo. She asked the community to pray for one another and she stated these are senseless killings. She said she doesn't know what's going on for people to just want to shoot or just threaten someone. She further stated we need to make sure we keep Our City in prayer and that is the only way this is going to be eliminated, by Our Lord and Savior helping us and teaching our children right from wrong. She said making sure we pay close attention to our children and what they are doing and the company they keep. She said the City is continuing to find resources to bring things to our recreation centers to keep our children and elderly protected. She said the City wants the community to bring whatever recommendations they may have for them to know what the community wants to see done.

Mayor Friday Ellis said good evening everyone and he thanked everyone for putting on their rain gear to attend the City Council meeting. He gave his condolences to the family of Mr. Richard Paul, and he said he worked with Mr. Richard in engineering where he learned a few things from him. He said Mr. Richard served the City for a while as the Assistant Engineer and maybe also working as interim engineer for a while. He stated he was a good man that will be missed dearly, and the City will keep his family in prayer. He noted for everyone to be weather aware, and he thinks the worst part of the storm should be hitting later tonight and into the early mornings. He said to be aware of all the things that can float away and clog up your drain. He said do what you can and if your neighbors down the street are elderly and need help, just check in on them. On another note, He noted as Councilwoman Dawson mentioned, the mural at the Charles Johnson Park, where some of the greatest of all time aka the GOATs of our neighborhoods. He said stories are being told in the mural, not only the impact they had on the court but also outside the court. He said these were the matriarchs and patriarchs of our communities that made sure that kids stayed busy, loved, and well connected in our recreation centers. He stated he had the privilege to attend the Wossman High School boys and girls basketball team in their championship parade. He said he read a proclamation and gave the keys to the City to both the boys and girls coach. He said you can make a big difference in your community and maybe it's not playing basketball, but maybe it's your impact and your legacy you leave for the other young folks within the community. He noted the City had the honor of doing a joint proclamation for the Children's Advocacy Center and if you're not aware of the work that they do, they are the hands and feet of this community. He further noted part of that is being a CASA advocate and he said they really step in the gap wherever there is child abuse in the community and for adoption. He said he and his wife are a CASA family and they had CASA advocates during their adoption. He said these are average citizens here in the community doing extraordinary things for families. He said if you ever feel the need to serve in that capacity and serve other families in the community please reach out to the Child Advocacy Center here in the City. He noted the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency showed interest in coming to the Council meeting to talk about their organization. He said they are giving and helping families to connect to vital organs that keep children alive. He said the City has amazing people in our community doing amazing things, and a lot of times we can line up and talk about what's wrong with our community, but he said he can promise there are more people doing great things that the City can line up about. He said Pilots for Patients is another organization that have served his family when his daughter needed treatment and whenever other people need treatment. Lastly, the Mayor announced the dates for Love the Boot week and the opportunities for the City to volunteer. He noted the City has put together a litter crew and they have collected over 120 tons of litter and debris from Highway 165, Interstate 20, and neighborhoods. He said that is not to add to what Ouachita Green has collected and other beautification crews. He said if you would like to volunteer there are a lot of opportunities and for more information reach out to the City at 318-329-2227 to get plugged into your community.

Mrs. Ezernack stated she believes the Organ Procurement Agency will come to the next meeting to give a presentation. She welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting, and she said we have a stormy night ahead of us. She stated as the Council has said we need to make we are being safe when traveling home. She said to pray the City doesn't incur any damage or any kind of problems during this rain event. She said she thinks it has been mentioned a few times, that this is the year the City needs to devote to kindness, caring, and peace. She said peace obviously in our community because of some of the things that have happened recently. She said we all have a part in that and to make sure that we provide our ideas and pray for peace. She thanked everyone for being at the meeting and she said the Council will try to get through the agenda for everyone to get home safely.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey and seconded by Ms. Woods, the minutes of the Legal and Regular session of March 26, 2024, were unanimously approved. (There were no public comments.)

RESOLUTIONS AND MINUTE ENTRIES:

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8693 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Northeast Louisiana Arts Council for a fundraiser (Blend) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8694 granting an exception to the Open Container to Ducks Unlimited for a fundraiser (Roadkill Cookoff) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8695 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Northeast Louisiana Children's Museum for a fundraiser (Juleps & Jockeys) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Ms. Woods and unanimously approved to remove from the agenda item (d) a Resolution granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the Mu Tau Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity for a fundraiser pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mrs. Dawson wanted to know the reason for removal of this agenda item.

Mrs. Ezernack stated the event is not going to take place.

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8696 granting an exception to the Open Container Ordinance to the General Claire L. Chennault Foundation for the (Red, White, & Blue Airshow) pursuant to Monroe City Code Sec. 12-231 D. (Open Container Ordinance), and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Mrs. Ezernack stated the Council has a copy of the certificate of insurance added to the packet.

Department of Public Works:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8697 adopting the City of Monroe/Monroe Transit System Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Engineering Services:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8698 accepting as substantially complete the work done by Womack and Sons Construction Group, LLC for the Ruffin Drive – Water Distribution System Improvement Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Resolution No. 8699 authorizing a designated city representative to execute Amendment No. 1 to the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the City of Monroe and Louisiana Office of Community Development related to the Young's Bayou Retention Pond Project and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and approved to Consider request from Family Dollar/Decision Consulting for a Major Conditional Use Permit authorizing the use of this location (3038 DeSiard Street) to allow alcohol beverage sales, off-premises in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). Major Conditional Uses are those uses that require another level of approval; therefore, this request comes before the City Council for their approval in addition to that of the Planning Commission. (Ms. Woods & Mr. Marshall Nay.) (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and approved to Consider request from Family Dollar/Decision Consulting for a Major Conditional Use Permit authorizing the use of this

location (7916 DeSiard Street) to allow alcohol beverage sales, off-premises in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). Major Conditional Uses are those uses that require another level of approval; therefore, this request comes before the City Council for their approval in addition to that of the Planning Commission. (Ms. Woods Nay.) (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods stated she would like to go on record, and she thinks the City have enough places that sale alcohol in our communities and she said the City has had all these shootings. She said as the City continues to put places in our communities and allow the sale of alcohol she doesn't see the City being able to continue to deal with a lot of the senseless shootings that the City have.

Mr. Marshall noted he agrees with what Ms. Woods stated and he said he knows 7916 DeSiard Street is in an area where there are commercial businesses. He said some areas that don't need an increase of alcohol sales. He said he thinks with some of the conversations they had with residents in the 3038 DeSiard Street area; there is a church around the corner and also communities in that area as well which is why there was a lot of concern about the increase of sales of alcohol. He stated this area is kind of close to Brookshire's and he thinks this is an area that should be okay.

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and approved to Consider request from Genesis Church of LA for a Major Conditional Use Permit to authorize a house of worship (church) at 1162 Oliver Road, Ste. 9 in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). Major Conditional Uses are those uses that require another level of approval; therefore, this request comes before the City Council for their approval in addition to that of the Planning Commission. (Mrs. Ezernack abstain.)

Upon motion of Mrs. Dawson, seconded by Mr. Harvey and unanimously approved to Consider request from Praise Temple COGIC for a Major Conditional Use Permit to authorize a house of worship (church) at 205 North 18th Street in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). Major Conditional Uses are those uses that require another level of approval; therefore, this request comes before the City Council for their approval in addition to that of the Planning Commission. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to Consider request from WALIA/Brad Warren for a Major Conditional Use Permit authorizing the use of this location (1304 Sterlington Road) to allow alcohol beverage sales, off-premises in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). Major Conditional Uses are those uses that require another level of approval; therefore, this request comes before the City Council for their approval in addition to that of the Planning Commission. (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved to Consider request from First Christian Church for a Major Conditional Use Permit to authorize a house of worship (church) at 7805 DeSiard Street in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance allows this as a Major Conditional Use in the B-3 (General Business/Commercial District). Major Conditional Uses are those uses that require another level of approval; therefore, this request comes before the City Council for their approval in addition to that of the Planning Commission. (There were no public comments.)

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance authorizing the City of Monroe to take corporeal possession of the property described below and sell to Lonnie Hudson, all rights, title, and interest that the City may have acquired to the Lot 20, Square 2, Blanks Addition, Ouachita Parish, 824 Marx St., District 5, Monroe, La, by adjudication at Tax Sale dated June 22, 2018, and further with respect thereto. (Legal) (There were no public comments.)

Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mr. Marshall and unanimously approved to Introduce an Ordinance revoking a portion of Grammont Street form South Stanley Avenue to its dead end and further providing with respect thereto. (There were no public comments.)

Ms. Woods noted she had conversations with Legal on this item, but for the record, because from time to time she would have residences in her District interested in closing or blocking off streets and dead ends. She wanted Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, to share with everyone, for people to better understand why the City is doing this.

Mr. Creekbaum stated on this particular revocation, this is the dead end portion that starts at the intersection of South Stanley and Grammont Street and proceeds back to the dead end. He said that portion of South Stanley is already blocked off by bollards, so it's not a roadway that comes with through traffic. He said this being done at the request of the adjacent business owner, Choice Brands, that want to significantly expand their business in that location. He noted it is his understanding it's going to be about a six and half million dollar investment in the expansion of their warehouse and storage facility for them to hold more inventory. He further noted for them to expand that footprint they needed to do some realignment, which needs some additional space. He said this is the dead end portion of the road that can't be used for future roadway access because they own the land around it and its not being used now currently. He stated there's no opposition from the City to this revocation request and that's why it was brought before the Council.

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

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing seeing no one come forward the Hearing was closed. Upon motion of Mr. Harvey, seconded by Mrs. Dawson and unanimously approved Ordinance No. 12,219 approving a Lease between the City of Monroe and Pilots for Patients at the Monroe Regional Airport and further providing with respect thereto.

Mr. Philip Thomas, President, CEO Pilots for Patients, stated he is happy to be with the City Council on this stormy night, but great things happen on stormy nights sometimes and this is one thing that he thinks would be great, not only for the City but for Pilots for Patients. He said they started this a little over 16 years ago with two dreams and he had the same dream two nights in a row that he shared with his wife. He said he thinks God wanted him to help people and that they needed to get involved flying more people to specialized treatment facilities not found locally. He said once they put the ball in motion it grew rapidly, and everything came together. He further stated their first mission was January 2008 and since then they started with five pilots but now they have over 140 pilots flying throughout Louisiana, parts of Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi. He noted most of their flights are going to MD Anderson Cancer Center because there are a lot of cancer patients in the area. He said they also had the opportunity to link with other groups in the nation and he said he is privy to know that a lot of them out 22 groups are actively helping one another relay patients as far away as Jacksonville, Florida to the Mayo Clinic they link or relay over. He further noted they are flying 15 to 30 missions a week and they have really needed to expand their area. He said the internet service at the facility on the South side hasn't been the greatest and when the opportunity came up to have this other building naturally they wanted to bid on it. He said sometimes they would have 8 to 15 people waiting in the little room and it's kind of tight but its homey. He said it gives them a chance to be with the patients, pray with them, give them hope, and encouragement. He said this is an opportunity to expand into this building and grow into the future and he said as of today they have flown 7,599 total missions since they have started. He said they have flown 2.8 million nautical miles, which is 129.98 times around the equator and one other very important factor is they have given back over \$6 million to In-kind services since they started, and they don't charge for the flights. He stated with the City's blessing they hope to grow and expand and not only help the City of Monroe and surrounding areas but bring more revenue back to Monroe. He further stated he probably needs another hundred pilots to cover the missions and areas that they are trying to cover. He said keep in mind its all-volunteer and his mission coordinators and marketing people are always out looking for the 3 P's (Pilots, Patients, and Patrons). He said if you know any good pilots that have a lot of hours or people that have an aircraft willing to donate their time to help their friends and neighbors have them contact Pilots for Patients.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to personally thank Mr. Thomas for his commitment to the community and the patients his organization serves. She said it's such a service to people that need a step up at that particular time. She thanked all the pilots that volunteer as well and she said the City is proud to have them based in Monroe.

Mr. Thomas said it's good to be here and they hope to keep growing.

Ms. Woods echoed the sentiments of Mrs. Ezernack, and she thanked Mr. Thomas as well. She stated she hasn't utilized their services but if ever in need she will definitely reach out. She said she didn't know they travel to MD Anderson and her mother is a patient there, but they drive her back and forth.

Mr. Thomas said he has some brochures to give Ms. Woods and he noted they are averaging 15 to 30 mission a week and probably 75% of the flights are going to Houston. He said there are a lot of good outcomes but unfortunately in their business some don't turn out so well.

Citizen's Participation:

(1.) Mr. Earl Harper, 118 Magnolia, said he has an issue in his backyard where water is running away to DeSiard Street. He said there is a block wall, but the footing is measuring 16 inches high before the block wall starts. He said the trash that was pushed from the contractor's property over to his property is causing problems. He said the water back over to the wall is about 20 feet coming towards his property and with the rain it's even more now. He stated he videoed showing where some places its nine inches and some places 5 to 6 inches of water. He said he was told it's a civil suit and he said when the guy had a dozer back where he was going to put the fence. He said he moved the trash that was on his property over to the property that was adjacent to his and now the water has no way of leaving out. He said his property is accumulating more water than it normally would on the property, and he said the guy made a statement to him that it's his problem. Mr. Harper wanted to know why should he have to go in his pocket to solve something if he had a permit to put a wall. He said he is being told he should have a lawyer, but the City have code enforcement and engineers. He said before the wall was put up there should have been a way to figure out where the water was flowing. He said when code enforcement came out there was a natural drain, but it was slow.

Mrs. Ezernack advised Mr. Harper to speak with Mr. Morgan McCallister, City Engineer, and Mr. Tommy James, Code Enforcement to see if they may be able to help him.

Ms. Woods said she thinks she has been inherited again with the new lines drawn and she told Mr. McCallister she would like to listen in on that conversation.

(2.) Mrs. Deborah Jackson, 300 Harrison Street, Francis Tower Retirement Center, said her roof has been leaking for 11 months, the laundry roof leaks, and her kitchen sink leaks. She said her apartment has been inspected by the manager but no repairs. She said she has a list of things she can go over and pictures, but she has a limit of 3 minutes. She stated she wanted to give the Council an idea of what the residents are going through, and she would come back later, but they really need some help.

Mrs. Ezernack wanted to know if there is any action the Council can take other than calling Monroe Housing Authority. She said the City is not over them even though they are called Monroe Housing Authority.

Mr. Brandon Creekbaum, City Attorney, noted it is a separate entity that operates separately and independently of the City. He said those concerns can be addressed there directly but it's still a building within the City. He further noted that is subject to the same code enforcement jurisdiction, or any other building code issue that may apply. He said Mr. James may speak with Ms. Jackso but there is no guarantee. He said he doesn't know what the particular issues are but it's something code enforcement can address.

Mr. Marshall stated he would get Ms. Jackson's information after the meeting.

The being no further business to come before the council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m., upon motion of Mr. Harvey and it was seconded by Mr. Marshall.

Mrs. Gretchen Ezernack
Chairman

Ms. Carolus S. Riley
Council Clerk

Ms. Ileana Murray
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.