

**Monroe Council Minutes**  
**Regular Meeting of Council**  
**August 25, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.**  
**This meeting was held electronically (remotely) pursuant to**  
**Ohio Revised Code Section 121.221**

***Pledge of Allegiance***

Mayor Frentzel opened the regular meeting of Council with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:30 p.m.

***Roll Call***

Council members present: Tom Callahan, Jason Frentzel, Keith Funk, Todd Hickman, and Christina McElfresh.

Mr. Funk moved to excuse Mrs. Hale and Mr. Routson; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Voice vote. Motion carried.

***Approval of the Minutes***

Mr. Funk moved to approve the Council Minutes of August 11, 2020; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Voice vote. Motion carried.

***Visitors***

The Clerk of Council read the following letters into the record:

“Tom Callahan,

I want to tell you about my next door neighbor, my good friend, a loving husband and father of four, proud citizen of the city of Monroe, and beloved member of the Sikh community. His name is Jaspreet “Jesse” Singh. While sitting at a red light on his way home from work in 2018, Jesse was the target of an armed robbery. He was shot, point-blank, several times, and died a few days later in the hospital. His family by his side, his four children too young to understand what happened to their father.

Your racist comment, succeeded by the racist meme you posted on social media the day after, and your cowardly silence in the two council meetings to follow, are a complete embarrassment to this great community. For a man that I would assume believes mainstream media is “fake news,” you have given the news media more comments on this matter than your own constituents. For someone who I'd bet considers himself a true patriot, you didn't even stand for the Pledge of Allegiance in the last council meeting.

Jesse's children, who are every bit of American as you and I, shouldn't have to grow up living in a community tolerant of such blind hatred. I call on Mayor Frentzel and the members of this council to decide if they will stand together to end racism, or if they

will allow an openly xenophobic member of its council continue to tarnish the values of which, I thought, this community represents. Mayor Frentzel, please comment on how you and your council will address Tom Callahan's grossly unethical behavior.

Sincerely,  
Jonathan Carlson”

“Members of Council,

My name is Kristen Carlson, and I am currently and have been a resident of Monroe for nearly a decade. Let me first say, I take no issue with Mr. Callahan's position on the mask mandate that was proposed in the July 14 council meeting, but to tell those who disagree with him to “stay in their basements” and likening mask policies to our government requiring “we all wear scarves on our head” progresses a bigoted and divisive ideology in a government assembly.

Mr. Callahan, I am deeply disappointed in the xenophobic metaphor you used in the City Council Meeting on July 14. You have embarrassed our town and taken no responsibility for your prejudiced comments. How quick you were to respond to local media outlets when questioned, and yet when your own constituents demand a response, you sit in petulant silence. You have been given every opportunity to demonstrate that you are willing to listen, learn, take accountability, be a man and apologize when you have erred in judgement. When you were elected to council, you said you were “ready to serve and hope to make a positive contribution to the City and its residents.” What a shame to learn that only applies to residents who look and think like you.

Since Mr. Callahan refuses to take responsibility for his foolish and insensitive remarks, I address this letter to Mayor Jason Frentzel. Mr. Mayor, what will you do to abate the concerns of Monroe residents who feel that Mr. Callahan cannot, or perhaps will not, set aside his prejudice to act in the best interest of ALL Monroe citizens? We are ready to put this unfortunate incident behind us and ask that you hold Councilman Callahan to the standard that Monroe and its residents deserve – free from bigotry, racism and xenophobia.

With sincere dissatisfaction,  
Kristen Carlson”

Since both letters asked Mayor Frentzel to make a comment, Mayor Frentzel thanked the residents for commenting and continuing to comment as he is glad that people are taking an active role in their community. Mayor Frentzel stated he does not condone the comments that were made, either the comment or the Facebook post. Everybody has their right to their own opinion on that. He does not agree with the statement. Mayor Frentzel advised that the City and Council must follow the Charter and the Codified Ordinances. He read Section 4.06 of the Charter into the record:

“The Council shall be the judge of the qualifications of its members. Council may, by two-thirds of its membership, expel or remove any member for failure to meet or maintain qualification of office, or for violation of his oath of office, or

for the conviction of a felony or other crime involving moral turpitude, or for persistent failure to abide by the rules of Council. Prior to any such action by Council, the accused member shall be notified in writing of the charge against him at least fifteen days in advance of any hearing upon such charge, and he and counsel shall be given an opportunity to be heard, present evidence or examine under oath any witness in support of such charge. The accused member shall not vote on the question of his removal.

A Councilman who is absent, without being excused by the majority of the other members of Council, from four consecutive regular meetings of Council, shall automatically vacate his office on the Council.”

It is the opinion of Mayor Frentzel that Mr. Callahan has violated this section of the Charter. He added that under laws of the State of Ohio the electorate can follow the recall procedure.

Mrs. McElfresh echoed Mayor Frentzel’s opinion and asked Mr. Callahan if he had anything to say.

Mr. Callahan noted that he was told not to say anything and just let this pass; however, he stated that all of the response he has received, via phone calls and letters, he felt a good 98% or 99% of the people are positive and stood behind him with what happened. There is 1%, if there is 1% maybe, that everyone has to play that race card. He guaranteed everyone on Council, including himself, are not racist. During his time in military school there were blacks and whites together. We might have a difference in words that may offend somebody, but you have to go on. Mr. Callahan pointed out the saying “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words would never hurt me.” He didn’t think any other members of Council could say they have invited someone of color to sit down at their dining room table and eat supper with them or visit with you. Mr. Callahan advised he does it all of the time and has more black friends than white friends. To drag this out for two months and have the media blow it out of proportion, that shows you what type of media that we have that they cannot print the truth. Mr. Callahan was pleased when Mr. Routson called out the *Journal* on the false news they printed. Mr. Callahan stated there was nothing to apologize about. During his business for 30 plus years he dealt with people from different races and different colors. He volunteers at the Air Force Museum and deals with people from different races all day. He said that you guys sit at your desk and do not see this stuff and he is out doing this. A lot of people are just truly American people and they understand that there are words that may hurt somebody. During his time in business he would give people pacifiers that came in crying around that he considers the one percent. Mr. Callahan then held up two pacifiers, one for Mrs. McElfresh and one for Mr. Hickman. He stated that he is not racist and he will always tell how it is and if someone doesn’t like it they can hit the road.

Mr. Hickman advised Mr. Callahan that he should have learned by now, but continues to dig himself deeper into this hole and should have taken the advice of whoever told him to let it fly and it will die. Mr. Hickman wasn’t sure if the *Journal* was wrong or not and pointed out that Mr. Callahan posted on the *Journal* a couple of times. Mr. Hickman felt those posts were inappropriate as well. Mr. Hickman disagreed with Mr. Callahan and thought there are more than one percent. Mr. Hickman informed Mr. Callahan that he should have probably apologized in the beginning and didn’t think there was really anything Council could do about it. Mr. Hickman advised that he was not going to hit the road.

Mr. Callahan stated that he and Mr. Hickman have worked close together and this will pass and we can get back to our job and do what we are supposed to be doing for the City. This hanging around Council meeting after Council meeting is getting a little ridiculous. That is why he spoke up because he is getting tired of it.

Kerry Roe of Clark Schaefer Hackett reported that his firm performs the audit on behalf of the Auditor of State's office and it has been completed. During the course of the audit a review of the City's internal controls and they did not find any material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in those controls. He noted that they received excellent cooperation from staff during the audit.

### ***Committee Reports***

None.

### ***Old Business***

**Resolution No. 54-2020.** A Resolution accepting the lowest and/or best bid submitted for a 2021 Freightliner Chassis with Step Van Upfit and authorize the City Manager to enter into an agreement with Fyda Freightliner Cincinnati, Inc. for said vehicle. (Second Reading)

Mr. Brock requested that Resolution No. 54-2020 be adopted as an emergency on the second reading to take advantage of the timeliness of the delivery.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Resolution No. 54-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the second reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Resolution No. 54-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Resolution No. 54-2020; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Roll call vote: five ayes. Motion carried.

### ***New Business***

**Emergency Resolution No. 55-2020.** A Resolution approving a Then-and-Now Certificate in the amount of \$8,708.96 to CDW Government and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock reported this is for the purchase of planned upgrades to servers and storage area network.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Resolution No. 55-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Resolution No. 55-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Resolution No. 55-2020; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Roll call vote: five ayes. Motion carried.

**Emergency Resolution No. 56-2020.** A Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a Collective Bargaining Agreement by and between the City of Monroe and the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (Patrol Officers) and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock stated that this and the next resolution are for the collective bargaining agreements with the patrol officers and police sergeants.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Resolution No. 56-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Resolution No. 56-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Resolution No. 56-2020; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Roll call vote: five ayes. Motion carried.

**Emergency Resolution No. 57-2020.** A Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a Collective Bargaining Agreement by and between the City of Monroe and the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (Sergeants) and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Resolution No. 57-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Resolution No. 57-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Resolution No. 57-2020; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Roll call vote: five ayes. Motion carried.

**Emergency Resolution No. 58-2020.** A Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement for professional architectural services for right-of-way acquisition for the Great Miami River Trail by and between the City of Monroe and Brandstetter Carroll Inc. and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock stated that this relates to property acquisition for the Great Miami River Trail and the City must follow the Ohio Department of Transportation's rules for this.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Resolution No. 58-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Resolution No. 58-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Resolution No. 58-2020; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Roll call vote: five ayes. Motion carried.

**Emergency Resolution No. 59-2020.** A Resolution accepting the proposal and authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement by and between the City of Monroe and Global Business Solutions, Inc. for the Fiber Optic Network Installation to the police facility at 601 South Main Street and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock explained that in order to provide a network between the City building and the new police facility fiber optic cable must be installed. The cost is \$57,562.00. Mr. Brock noted that this is an emergency so that the dispatch equipment can be tested and everything is fully operational.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Resolution No. 59-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Resolution No. 59-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Resolution No. 59-2020; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Roll call vote: five ayes. Motion carried.

### ***Administrative Reports***

Mr. Brock noted that we are looking at a 9-1-1 ceremony, but without the attendance of any of the public.

Mr. Brock advised that the conciliator approved the contract in favor of the IAFF and sought Council's opinion on releasing the wage freeze on non-union employees. We were prepared to implement the items in the wage study and then the budget was reduced by five percent. As reflected in the five-year forecast, he proposed to release that wage freeze effective October 1<sup>st</sup> for the non-union administrative employees. This would add approximately \$30,000 to \$40,000 to the appropriations.

Mr. Hickman asked when the wage freeze came into effect and Mr. Brock advised it was during March when the budget decreases took place. Mr. Brock advised that we are looking at a number of employees that were due merit increases prior to the five percent reduction.

Mrs. McElfresh has no problem lifting the wage freeze, but want to make sure we are not putting ourselves in a financial position with a negative impact.

- **Fireworks Discussion**

Mr. Brock referred to the operations plan by the Chief of Police and the additional cost for staff is approximately \$6,500.

Mr. Hickman asked how the citizens of Monroe get all 130 parking spaces at the park as you will probably have people all over coming in for the fireworks. He still does not believe the fireworks should take place as it is a waste of the taxpayers money.

Mr. Brock confirmed Mr. Funk's understanding that a decision to make it a drive-in event was not made.

Mayor Frentzel is concerned that there is only parking for approximately 130 cars and most the surrounding neighborhoods that will be able to see from their homes. People do actually find a place to park. He felt it was a good way to give the residents something positive.

Mrs. McElfresh would like people to have a good time, but want people to be safe. When you have a letter from the Butler County Health Department saying this is not a good idea, she needs to go with that.

Mr. Funk recommended that the fireworks take place on Saturday.

Mr. Hickman moved to cancel the fireworks for Labor Day weekend; seconded by Mr. Callahan. Roll call vote: three ayes; two nays (Frentzel and Funk). Motion failed.

Mr. Funk moved to hold the fireworks on Saturday; seconded by Mr. Frentzel. Roll call vote: two ayes; three nays. Motion failed.

Mrs. McElfresh asked how big of a shell can the City get. Joe Rozzi replied that they are doing away with low level products. Most of the communities invited everyone to stay home and did not invite anyone into the event space. Mr. Rozzi offered to come in this week and shoot a few demo shells so that the community has the ability to see the fireworks from their home.

Mr. Hickman asked if the limit on the size of shell is still in effect. Mr. Rozzi advised that the maximum size shell is 6 inches. He noted the larger shells get more expensive and the show would be shorter.

General discussion took place between members of Council on drive in only, no restrictions, size of shells, and the date to hold the fireworks.

Mrs. McElfresh moved to hold the fireworks on Saturday; seconded by Mr. Funk. Roll call vote: four ayes; one abstention (Hickman). Motion carried.

- **Executive Session** – To consider the purchase of property and the sale of property at competitive bidding.

Mr. Funk moved to adjourn into executive session to consider the purchase of property and the sale of property at competitive bidding; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Roll call vote: five ayes. Motion carried.

Council adjourned into executive session at 8:01 p.m.

Mr. Funk moved to reconvene into regular session; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Voice vote. Motion carried.

Council reconvened into regular session at 8:29 p.m.

*Adjournment*

Mr. Funk moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Hickman. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The regular meeting of Council adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela S. Wasson, MMC  
Clerk of Council