

The Mayor and Council met for a called meeting.

Those Present:	John Howard	Mayor
	Larry Bradley	Vice-Mayor
	Lee Malcom	Council Member
	Ross Bradley	Council Member
	Tyler Gregory	Council Member
	Nathan Little	Council Member
	David Dickinson	Council Member
	Logan Propes	City Administrator
	Debbie Kirk	City Clerk
	Russell Preston	City Attorney
	Paul Rosenthal	City Attorney

Absent:	Myoshia Crawford	Council Member
	Norman Garrett	Council Member

Staff Present: Beth Thompson, Chris Bailey, Sadie Krawczyk, Patrick Kelley, Les Russell

Visitors: Sharon Swanepoel, David Clemons, Denise Etheridge, Debra Smith, Ron Smith, Svea Cohton, Richard Hawk, Shauna Mathias, Clayton Mathias, Jason Sams, Julie Sams, Bobby Beck, Ricky Buchanan, Marcia Young, Christie Johnson, Greg Fischer, Tally Fischer, Robert Chancey, Kathy Chancey, Sandra Davis, Drew Davis, Tara Polson, Jenifer Goodman, Rita Dickinson, Riley Tucker, Jo Ann Powers, James Hyde, June Hyde, Gareth Fenley, Laura Gross, Kathy Timm, Mike Timm, Joey Gross, Michael Wilkie, Gwendolyn Wilkie, Sophie Barnes, Brent Echols, Adriane Brown, Melissa Miller, Dav Miller, Sandra Dunham, Greg Moon, Pat Flack, Lauren Scruggs, Carole Franzone, Cynthia Johnson, Carolyn Miner, Jonathan Skelton, Janalyn Waldroup, Ray Waldroup, Josiah Waldroup, Mike Mirolli, Michelle Mirolli, Lorraine Payne, Kim Jolly, Wayne Jolly, Susan Walker, Dianne Wilson, Natalie Boswell, Gabrielle Boswell, Sam Davis, Moran Davis, BreAnne Robinson, Jim Brown, Rod Johnson, Kris Robinson, Dan Kelleher, Dan Miller, Georgia Horshel, Stanton Whitmire, Sarah Faircloth, Callie Bailey, Nathan Farmer, Chris Hall, Kelsey Hall, Debbie Bouchard, Kathy Clester, Amanda Dulaney, Nicholas Dulaney, Kerri Brooks, Kaylee Brooks, Maddie Brooks, Mary Williams, Joseph Gargas, Laura Powell, Rosa Crawford, Roney Manning, Bonnie Manning, Henry Harbuck, Elizabeth Goff, David Goff, Kimberly Robinson, Rachael Barrientos, Monica Mose, Emma Baldwin, Patty Holland, Walter Holland, Taylor Hanson, Kolby Hanson, Charlie Brooks, Marl Clevenger, Matt Stewart, Amanda Stewart, Theodore Wright, Shadonne Wright, Valerie Garner, Susan Helzerman, Kyle McKinnon, Fredrick Smith, Levi Roberts, Samantha Meehan, Therisa Booker, Cynthia Booker, Danial Corbin, Melinda Sumlin, Tabatha Patrick, Liane Akins, Eric Watts, June Roberts, Toni Petty, Aniyah Petty, Trevor Lovelace, JoAnn Darget, Mark Albury, Brian Krawczyk, Joe Gargas, Chip Morris, Caleb Morris, Ben Krawczyk, Spencer Seay, Grace Seay, Mark Polson, , Sally Potter, Jennifer Rice, Natalie Willett, Melissa Willet, Carla Fisher, Rita White, Angela Schwebel Kuykendall, Violet Martin, Kay Martin, Connie Camp, Robin Peters, Sarah Johnson, Zoey Johnson, Caleb Johnson, Alexis Lalaian, Mitch Allgood, Fay Brassie, Elizabeth Jones, Jane Camp, Tara Polson, Shelby Hawkins

I. CALL TO ORDER – JOHN HOWARD

1. Roll Call

Mayor Howard noted that all Council Members were present, except Council Member Myoshia Crawford and Council Member Norman Garrett. There was a quorum.

II. NEW BUSINESS**1. Discussion – Walton County Public Safety and Jail Complex**

Mayor Howard questioned how many audience members were in favor of the proposed location for the jail, which was zero. All members of the audience are against the new jail being located on Church Street.

City Administrator Logan Propes thanked everyone for coming tonight. He explained Council Members are going to be given a chance to discuss their thoughts on the Public Safety and Jail Complex. They can comment on the pros, cons, and what they are hearing from their constituents.

Council Member David Dickinson thanked everyone for what they have done by communicating the problem with the County. The County wants to take an action that will impact the City and the neighborhoods without consulting the City, while using information that is almost a decade old. Mr. Dickinson stated he did not know that the July 3 vote was going to happen, until after it had already happened; no one contacted him, any of the residents, or District 4 Council Member Larry Bradley. He discussed the study which was done in 2013, that stated there would be neighborhood push back. The petition on change.org has almost 1,600 signatures. This is bad policy by the County that hurts the entire City. The City of Monroe is the economic engine of Walton County; the Cities generate most of the sales tax revenue. He stated it is absurd that they didn't speak to the City about the jail location. The jail should not be in any residential area; it needs to be in an industrial area. The lame excuses given for using this site just doesn't add up. Council works for the citizens, and it is their sacred duty to stand up for the citizens. This meeting and resolution are Council's way of standing up collectively for the citizens; the City will not be run over by the County.

Vice-Mayor Larry Bradley stated he appreciates everyone being there and hopes they will come back for other Council Meetings, even if the items are not as significant as this one. He would like to speak to Chairman Thompson, the Commissioners, and Sheriff Chapman if they are listening; he wants them to understand that the City of Monroe is not fighting them on building a jail. Mr. Propes and the City staff are willing to help find an appropriate site that is not located in a residential neighborhood. He stated many people from Monroe and Walton County have contacted him about this issue over the last few weeks by email, text, phone, and personal visits. Mr. Bradley read the following email into the record that was sent from a constituent to Mayor Howard, Mr. Dickinson, and himself: First off, thank you so much for your leadership and desire to serve our city. I am writing today to you as my mayor and City Council representatives in regards to the County's potential decision to locate a new jail at the corner of East Church Street and Hammond. I am adamantly opposed to this decision. While I know this is a Walton County decision, I believe the impact of this will directly affect the health and growth of Monroe for many years. My hope is that the City leadership will unequivocally denounce this potential development, and intentionally work together with County leadership to find a better solution and/or location. When we first moved to Monroe 8 years ago, we were explicitly told by developers that they, "would not build in the Monroe Area school district." And in fact you could see the development of neighborhoods on one side of the Walnut Grove line and none on the other. When we renovated a house just off of Madison and Davis in 2013, and worked to improve the quality of housing in the area, we were told by some local leaders, "You couldn't give me a house on Davis Street." When we began to do clean up projects in the summer of 2014 at Pilot Park and the surrounding area, we were told we were, "wasting our time because no one goes to that park except criminals and thugs." So when the County says that 10 years ago there was a study that determined that area was the best site in the entire county for a new jail expansion, I reply that a lot has changed in the last 10 years. Monroe is not the same place it was a decade ago, and especially that side of town. And there is a whole lot of land in Walton County. There are a lot of new residents, like my family, that are passionate about this place. We have many church members who have bought, built, and/or renovated homes up and down East Church Street and in the adjacent area, some of whom now back up to this proposed site. In addition, we are now finally seeing the development of quality, family-oriented neighborhoods around Carver Middle School in areas that were largely ignored or abandoned before. That growth and excitement will all come to a screeching halt if there is even the potential of a jail being built on that plot of land. It makes zero sense to put a massive jail complex in the middle of an up-and-coming residential neighborhood, regardless of how convenient it may be to the current courthouse. I believe you can help find some land away from homes, parks, and schools, and/or in an industrial area like Vine Street if it is deemed necessary that we actually need a new, larger prison for our County detainees. The impact on future property tax values, as well as the

stunted growth of one of the current hottest residential areas of our community will directly impact the City of Monroe. The site of a large detention facility, barbed wire and spotlights at one of the major gateways into our city will impact the perception of Monroe in the future. There is no pretty way to build a jail. The direct impact on Carver Middle School will eventually affect Monroe Area High School, which will have a future impact on our town. This is a legacy moment that will directly impact the kind of City we leave future generations. It reminds me of a story I read from a number of years ago about when the County was discussing bulldozing the historic courthouse in order to put in a parking lot, because it would "be better for business." Had it not been for a handful of Monroe leaders and residents who stood together against that decision, we would now have a bunch of asphalt in the center of our beautiful town. So please come together as a City Council in opposition to this proposed site. I do not think this has to be ugly or political. We can all work together - City leaders, County officials, residents and neighbors, to figure out the best thing for all Walton County citizens. I believe we all want the same thing - for Monroe (and Walton County) to be a great place to live, work, and play, not just now, but for the next 100 years. Thank you again for all your hard work. I pray for each of you. If you have any questions, or know any way that I can serve or help please let me know. Mr. Bradley stated this sums up what everyone is trying to say to the people at Walton County.

Council Member Tyler Gregory thanked all of the citizens for voicing their opinions. Officials need to hear the voices in order to make the correct decisions when moving forward and to make the town what they want it to be. There is no reason this has to be political or a battle. The City wants a jail and what is best for the County, but not in this location. He thanked everyone that has poured time and energy into Church Street, Downtown, and the City. Amazing things have happened for the City in a short amount of time. Mr. Gregory stated he heard about the new jail from his wife, who saw it on Facebook, and he could not believe it. The City is very excited to work with the County and wants to keep the union alive, but also wants what is best for the citizens. He questioned whether someone would want to buy a house in front of a jail or want property to be taken away from homeowners. This is unacceptable. Council Members and the government work for the citizens; the government should fear the people, not the people fear the government. He thanked David Dickinson, Larry Bradley, and Mayor Howard for speaking up and standing up for the people.

Council Member Lee Malcom stated it is exciting to see the passion and leadership within the community that is against this County initiative. She also learned about it on social media, which is very disappointing. Everyone needs to work together with open minds; they need to come together with short- and long-range planning for the betterment of all. She hopes this resolution will make a strong statement to the County Commissioners and to the public. Involvement is key from the citizens and communication is key from the government.

Council Member Ross Bradley stated he has learned from having private businesses in other counties that local County and City leadership rarely ever get along. This Council works really well together and also has a good relationship with the County. He trusts the leadership in the City and believes in it; he trusts the heart of the community. He hopes by being unified together everyone will see the positive results that they want. Council is always available for questions and comments. He thanked everyone for being there.

Council Member Nathan Little stated he has not talked to anyone that thinks the jail being in this location is a good idea. It is very encouraging to see citizens stand up and speak out. He agrees with all of the comments and does not think it is the correct place to put the jail. The jail should not be in any residential area. He appreciates everyone coming.

Mayor Howard thanked Clayton and Shauna Mathias, Jason and Julie Sams, and Rita Dickinson for heading up this opposition campaign from the public.

2. Resolution – Opposing Jail Complex on East Church Street

To approve the resolution.

*Motion by Dickinson, seconded by L. Bradley.
Passed Unanimously.*

Mayor Howard stated that he and City Administrator Logan Propes have met with Chairman Thompson and Sheriff Chapman five or six times discussing alternate locations. Mayor Howard stated the County will be issuing a press release today dated July 27, 2021. Council Member Lee Malcom read the following joint press release from Chairman David Thompson and Mayor John Howard: County and City Leadership Considering Alternative Public Safety Complex Location Sites. Monroe – July 27, 2021 – Today, the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, David Thompson, and the Mayor of the City of Monroe, John Howard, met concerning the proposed public safety complex location off Church Street. Both parties understand the concerns citizens have over the current proposed site off Church Street in Monroe. “When considering the current site behind the Government Building, my goal was to look at a site that was safe for our law enforcement, convenient to transport prisoners, and keeping our government buildings located within close proximity to each other,” stated Thompson. At the meeting of the two leaders, Mayor Howard stated that he understood the chairman’s point of view but expressed concerns citizens have on the Church Street location. Chairman Thompson stated that he was “open minded” about other locations. Both leaders are working together to consider alternative sites in the county seat. “We know that wherever we put the jail, someone is not going to be happy, but I’m open to considering other options,” stated Thompson.

III. ADJOURN

*Motion by R. Bradley, seconded by Gregory.
Passed Unanimously.*



MAYOR



CITY CLERK