

CITY OF MONROE
SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
300 WEST CROWELL STREET
MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA 28112
TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2025 – 3:00 P.M.
AGENDA
www.monroenc.org

- Item 1.** Public Comment Period
- Item 2.** Approval of Minutes – December 3, 2024
- Item 3.** Autistic Child Signage Policy
- Item 4.** City Communication Team Community Survey Update
- Item 5.** Legislative Agenda Discussion
- Item 6.** Other Business

ATTENTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Please contact Angie Sustar at asustar@monroenc.org or 704-282-4651 to confirm your attendance. Thank you.

**CITY OF MONROE
SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 3, 2024
MINUTES**

The Special Needs and Disabilities Committee of the City of Monroe, North Carolina met in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 300 West Crowell Street in Monroe, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m. on December 3, 2024 with Chair Julie Thompson presiding.

Members Present: Council Member Julie Thompson (Chair), Mayor Robert Burns, Committee Member Kelly Stegall, Committee Member Melinda Plue, Property Management Director Ryan Jones (ex-officio), and Clerk Angie Sustar

Members Absent: Karen Heath

Staff: Assistant City Manager Lisa Hollowell, Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director Pete Hovanec

Guests: Patricia Daniels, Principal at Wolfe School

Chair Thompson called the Special Needs and Disabilities Committee Meeting of December 3, 2024 to order at 3:03 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. A quorum was present.

Item No. 1. Public Comment. None

Item No. 2. Approval of Minutes – November 5, 2024. Chair Thompson asked if anyone had any questions or concerns about the minutes, if not, if anyone would like to make a motion that the minutes of the November 5, 2024 Special Needs and Disabilities Committee be approved.

Motion: Member Plue moved to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2024 meeting.

Second: Member Stegall

Action: The motion to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2024 meeting passed unanimously with the following votes.

AYES: Chair Thompson, Mayor Burns, Members Stegall, and Plue

NAYS: None

Chair Thompson advised of the rearrangement of the order of the Agenda and moved to Item 4.

Item No. 4. Other Business. Member Plue advised that a person in the community brought to her attention that a group coming to the Dowd Theater consisted of all little people. She inquired about the decision making process about groups being brought to the Dowd. She opined that it seemed tacky or cringy and wondered if further committee discussion was appropriate.

Chair Thompson stated it is applicable to this committee. She asked if everyone was aware of the referred to event. Everyone was aware.

Mr. Hovanec advised that Mini KISS, a professional cover band of the band KISS will perform at the Dowd Center Theater on January 16. Our booking agent contacted staff with the opportunity to

schedule a mid-week performance. This professional band has performances scheduled the weekend before and the weekend after the mid-week performance at the Dowd. He stated he understands the concern and appearance to a point; he emphasized that the touring band was not being exploited if that was the concern. He advised that moving forward he and staff will take a more holistic look and look at things through a higher lens.

Discussion followed.

Item No. 3. Wolfe School Overview. Chair Thompson introduced and welcomed Patricia Daniels, Principal at Union County Public School's Wolfe School. Ms. Daniels provided a brief introduction and an overview of Wolfe School. She advised that Wolfe School serves students with intellectual / developmental disabilities grade equivalent six to twelve but age equivalent twelve to twenty-two years old in a specialized setting. Helping individuals to become as independent as possible so that they can be functioning members of their school community and be as independent in their home as possible, and then can be independent in the community as they transition to adult life.

Ms. Daniels shared her passion to bring awareness of the need to have disability friendly playgrounds and sensory areas in the community and how to ensure they are inclusive through advertising of signage etc. She stated that signage would provide people a better understanding of who might be utilizing the identified spaces.

Committee members continued their discussion with Ms. Daniels seeking to identify challenges that the community may have experienced. She stated that families have said community engagement activities in general being more disability friendly. An example would be to have an identified sensory section at the holiday parade. In this section, the marching band color guard would perform and the band would be silent, there would be no sirens, and no loud noises.

Discussion followed with Ms. Daniels providing insight and suggesting small changes to make events sensory friendly and how to advertise events to the families more effectively.

Mr. Hovanec advised that the Science Center has a sensory room, Parks and Recreation is building upon adaptive use playgrounds, the Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center in partnership with Union County Public Schools hosts the Coffee Nut Coffee Shop at MAFC, and Santa's Workshop Experience to provide an opportunity for children with sensory processing needs to visit Santa.

Mr. Jones stated that opportunities exists within the current special events footprint to accommodate some type of sensory areas.

Member Stegall and Ms. Daniels continued discussion relating to the North Carolina Partners Innovations Waivers information, a new program at Wingate University, the state of North Carolina's allocation of \$194,000 to fifteen community colleges to increase accessibility for individuals with IDD, and how to create opportunities for students or individuals who have more significant or more severe disabilities.

Chair Thompson asked Ms. Daniels if she was aware of a program anywhere for someone transitioning out of the program at Wolfe that could be looked at as a model. Ms. Daniels will research programs and provide feedback.

After a short discussion, one issue identified was the need for employment life opportunities for students or individuals who have more significant or more severe disabilities.

Item No. 4. City Communication Team Survey Update. Mr. Jones advised that the survey is an item on the General Services agenda for recommendation to City Council. He advised that the survey will be made available on the City's website as soon as Council approves.

Member Stegall asked if this information will be communicated to populations or agencies that could benefit like Union County Public Schools.

Mr. Jones advised that several departments have standing relationships with other organizations that can be made aware.

There being no further business, Member Stegall made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Burns seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES:	Member Stegall, Chair Thompson, and Mayor Burns
NAYS:	None

The meeting adjourned at
4:03 p.m.