

CITY OF MONROE
COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES REGULAR MEETING
300 WEST CROWELL STREET
MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA 28112
TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2026 – 3:00 P.M.
AGENDA
www.monroenc.org

- Item 1.** Welcome
- Item 2.** Approval of Minutes – April 7, 2026
- Item 3.** Listening Session – Public Input Regarding Individuals with Disabilities
- Item 4.** Other Business

ATTENTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Please contact Angie Sustar at asustar@monroenc.org or 704-290-1838 to confirm your attendance. Thank you.

**CITY OF MONROE
COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 7, 2026
MINUTES**

The Committee on Disabilities 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 April 7, 2026.

Members Present: Melinda Plue (Chair), Karen Heath, Jonathan Belk (ex officio)

Members Absent: Kelly Stegall

Staff Present: Property Management Director Ryan Jones (ex officio), Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director Pete Hovanec, Downtown Director Ashley Nowell, Communication Supervisor Jason Puckett, Assistant City Manager Lisa Hollowell, and Clerk Angie Sustar

Visitors: Linda Belk and Trinisha Dean

Chair Plue called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. A quorum was present.

Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes – March 3, 2026. Ms. Heath made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2026 meeting. Chair Plue seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Member Heath and Chair Plue
NAYS: None

Item No. 2 Listening Session on May 5, 2026. Chair Plue advised that the “Listening Session” is an opportunity for families, people with disabilities, and anyone impacted by this committee to be heard. Chair Plue asked how the upcoming session will be announced and promoted to the community and the parameters for each person desiring to speak during the session. A discussion followed between Ms. Heath, Chair Plue, Mr. Jones, Mr. Belk and ACM Hollowell regarding the informational flyer’s content, emphasizing the need for clear messaging to ensure community feedback remains focused on the intended topics. There was a consensus that the informational flyer states the purpose of the Listening Session is to seek community input relating to accessibility, inclusion, and critical needs for the disability community.

ACM Hollowell provided insight relating to the session and advised that guidelines used by Council could be provided, which can be included on the “Listening Session” announcement flyer. She emphasized the importance of how the committee responds to comments, noting that even if speakers are critical of the City or Committee, it is their time to speak, and for the members to thank them for their comments.

A brief discussion ensued regarding how to capture community input and convey it to Council. ACM Hollowell advised recording the meeting to ensure comments are heard. She clarified that

the goal is for the Committee to use this feedback to develop recommendations. The Committee will use these recordings to discuss potential recommendations before deciding what to move forward to Council. Mr. Jones noted that the committee has established its goals and objectives. He emphasized that community input is essential to ensure the committee remains aligned with public needs, noting that this feedback will be used to refine the subjective elements of the objectives.

Item No. 3 Alliance for Children Discussion. Trinisha Dean, Executive Director of the Alliance for Children, provided an introduction and overview of the organization's role in managing the Monroe Christmas Parade for over twenty years.

Chair Plue relayed a request from the Committee on Disabilities regarding potential enhancements to make the parade more sensory-friendly for individuals with varying sensory sensitivities.

Ms. Dean presented the current parade route and proposed a designated sensory zone location. To further accommodate attendees, she recommended establishing a station to provide headphones. Mr. Belk added a suggestion to provide sunglasses for individuals with sun sensitivity. Discussion followed.

Chair Plue asked if further input was needed from the committee. Ms. Dean suggested that the committee submit a formal request outlining specific bullet points regarding expectations. Chair Plue stated she will draft a document and forward it to the committee for review.

Mr. Hovanec stated that Parks and Recreation will be happy to provide the headphones and sunglasses for the parade.

Ms. Nowell shared that she has reached out to Compleat Kids, a new business downtown about offering sensory-friendly options during the parade and other downtown activities.

Item No. 4 Staff Updated: The Dowd Center Theatre – Sensory friendly summer movies.

Mr. Jones advised that a regular sensory-friendly movie series is in place. He noted the need to verify that current efforts are effective and aligned with the intended approach. He suggested having a bulleted list of specific enhancements to ensure the event accurately match the needs of individuals attending.

Mr. Hovanec provided an update on current standards, noting a general reduction in volume and darkness. He highlighted specific features of sensory-friendly screenings, including increased lighting, spaced-out seating, and the removal of loud pre-show advertisements. He invited further suggestions to enhance the sensory-friendly experience. A brief discussion followed relating to the selection of movies, show times, and age appropriateness.

Item No. 5 Other Business. Chair Plue announced that Mr. Belk will be allotted five minutes at each meeting to share with the committee on a topic of interest or to share perspectives related to his lived experience.

Mr. Belk advised that April is Autism Acceptance Month. He shared an inspirational message relating to the importance of this recognition and his appreciation for the Committee on Disabilities and work that has started.

Chair Plue announced that she and Mr. Belk would attend the upcoming City Council meeting on Tuesday, April 14. Through their coordination, Councilwoman Thompson will present a proclamation designating April as Autism Acceptance Month, which Mr. Belk will formally accept on behalf of the Committee.

There being no further business, Ms. Heath made a motion to adjourn. Chair Plue seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Member Heath and Chair Plue
NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m.

DRAFT