

CITY OF MONROE
COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES REGULAR MEETING
300 WEST CROWELL STREET
MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA 28112
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2026 – 3:00 P.M.
AGENDA
www.monroenc.org

- Item 1.** Approval of Minutes – June 2, 2026
- Item 2.** Staff Notes for Informational Purposes Only – August 4, 2026
- Item 3.** Guest Speaker from the Union County Public Schools Exceptional Children’s Department
- Item 4.** Voluntary Disability Decals Discussion
- Item 5.** 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
JUNE 2, 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 June 2, 2026.

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

Staff Present: Property Management Director Ryan Jones (ex officio), Assistant City Manager Lisa Hollowell

Visitors: Linda Belk

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

Item No. 2 Discussion of May's Listening Session. Chair Plue advised that Ms. Stegall took notes. As a follow up to the May Listening Session for individuals with disabilities, Ms. Stegall reviewed her notes from the meeting for discussion.

- Discussed a request for on-site refrigerator access at the Bazemore Active Adult Center to allow participants with medical conditions (e.g., Celiac, diabetes) to store necessary dietary food.
- Mr. Jones gave a brief overview on the programs, services and social aspects available at the Bazemore Active Adult Center.

Chair Plue suggested inviting Belle Walker the Exceptional Children's Programs Lead Social Worker for Union County Public School System to discuss the transition fair hosted by UCPS.

Ms. Stegall suggested developing a 6-12-month speaker schedule to invite speakers for upcoming meetings.

Ms. Stegall asked ACM Hollowell if the city has an accessibility plan with specific benchmarks to ensure residents with disabilities can fully participate in city life.

ACM Hollowell reported that compliance initiatives are managed individually by each department rather than through a single master plan. She stated that the Communications Department is working toward a 2027-2028 goal for closed captioning and media communications, while Sarah McAllister oversees curb cuts and sidewalk improvements within the Streets and Engineering Department.

Chair Plue recommended dedicating a specific staff role to oversee accessibility initiatives and have City Council fund a comprehensive accessibility survey.

Ms. Stegall suggested centralizing all department plans onto a single “Disability Services” or “Accessibility Services” website tab to clearly communicate the city’s investments and progress toward general accessibility.

ACM Hollowell supported the idea, noting the need to define the project’s purpose and identify who will design the display. She questioned whether the goal is to show city compliance or to explain how the services help residents.

Ms. Stegall emphasized that the city’s accessibility efforts extend beyond basic Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) compliance into broader community investment, suggesting a centralized online resource to showcase these initiatives for current and prospective residents with disabilities.

ACM Hollowell noted the funding complexity challenges in tracking disability service investments because funding spans multiple city departments and NC Department of Transportation projects. She suggested the group identify five specific goals and clarify the target audience (individuals with disabilities versus the public at large) before proceeding.

Mr. Jones highlighted the ongoing progress made over the past seven or eight years to improve park accessibility. He noted that previous park layouts lacked internal pathways, but through two PARTF grants, the Parks and Recreation and Property Management departments have focused heavily on installing accessible walkways leading directly to park amenities. He provided specific examples of the new pathway at Belk Tonawanda Park used for 4th of July event, the installation of inclusive playground equipment like accessibility swings, and the current sidewalk connectivity project at Creft Park. He acknowledged ACM Hollowell’s point, stating that while formal written policies may not be explicitly documented, prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity is an established, intentional thought process guiding all current and future department projects.

Chair Plue expressed appreciation for the City of Monroe’s forward-thinking approach and recommended acknowledging their efforts publicly.

Ms. Stegall noted that prospective families moving to the area often research school accessibility and performance via local online forums (such as media pages).

ACM Hollowell ask Ms. Stegall if she could provide an example of another town that successfully compiles this type of information to serve as a model.

Ms. Heath stated that Rock Hill, SC has an awesome park.

Ms. Stegall noted that cities such as Asheville, Raleigh, and Wilmington have actively invested in accessibility. In reference to Chair Plue’s recommendation for a city-funded accessibility study, Ms. Stegall stated that while the city likely meets baseline ADA requirements, the study’s primary value is in identifying ways to actively enhance community accessibility. She suggested utilizing the study’s findings to build a long-term, phased transition plan. Although the City

cannot fund all recommendations at once, a multi-year execution strategy would demonstrate ongoing commitment and boost the City's competitive appeal for prospective residents.

Chair Plue recommended High Point, NC, as a resource for its ongoing ADA transition plan, webpage compliance survey, and status as the first certified Autism Destination City on the East Coast (shared by Ms. Stegall).

Mr. Belk noted that budget constraints from split departmental funding, as mentioned by ACA Hollowell, could be addressed by increasing awareness of the needs of the disabled community across departments

Ms. Heath highlighted a disability awareness exercise conducted by a town near Virginia Beach, where council members spent a day in wheelchairs. The initiative successfully illustrated the daily challenges faced by disabled residents and highlighted local accessibility needs.

Chair Plue advised that as an advisory committee if we would like the city to do something we would make a recommendation to Council for budget consideration.

ACM Hollowell outlined the process for making funding recommendations to City Council, suggesting the committee research accessibility study costs and invite key department directors to review their current budget initiatives. She noted that the Downtown master plan may include something relating to accessibility.

Ms. Stegall shared insight on the processes of implementing an accessibility plan.

The committee discussed scheduling future listening sessions. Chair Plue announced that the next Listening Session is set for the Tuesday, November 3, 2026 at 6:00pm in City Hall Council Chamber.

Chair Plue noted the need to increase committee representation from the city and expand diversity regarding members' abilities. She questioned whether recruitment is handled through a standardized process or managed on a committee-by-committee basis.

ACM Hollowell noted that current committee vacancies may be advertised. Interested candidates must complete an application, which will be submitted to the Citizens Appointment Committee for review and subsequent recommendation to City Council.

Chair Plue reported that the recent City Council meeting was a live closed-captioning test and did not save as a permanent recording. She stated that AI-generated captioning is flawed as compared to live captioning. Chair Plue announced that she is sending a thank you letter to City Council on behalf of the committee.

Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes – May 5, 2026 Ms. Stegall made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 5, 2026 meeting. Ms. Heath seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES:	Member Stegall, Heath, and Chair Plue
NAYS:	None

Item No. 4 Other Business.

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

AYES: Member Stegall, Heath, and Chair Plue

NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

DRAFT

**CITY OF MONROE
COMMITTEE ON DISABILITIES
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 4, 2026 – 3:00 P.M.**

STAFF NOTES FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

The Committee on Disabilities of the City of Monroe, North Carolina was scheduled to meet in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 300 West Crowell Street in Monroe, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m. on August 4, 2026. Due to the lack of a quorum, Chairwoman Melinda Plue proceeded with the agenda for informational purposes for those attending. Staff notes were prepared *for informational purposes only*.

Members Present: Melinda Plue (Chair) and Jonathan Belk (ex officio)

Members Absent: Members Kelly Stegall and Karen Heath

Staff Present: Property Management Director Ryan Jones (ex officio) and Assistant City Manager Lisa Hollowell

Visitors: Linda Belk, Natalie Ward, and Deirdre Cato

Due to the lack of a quorum, Chair Plue proceeded with the agenda for information purposes for those attending. Staff notes will be prepared for information purposes only. The meeting began at 3:03 p.m. called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. A quorum was present. Chair Plue advised of the rearrangement of the order of the agenda.

Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes – June 2, 2026 No action taken due to the lack of a quorum.

Item No. 2 Guest speaker from Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) Natalie Ward, Business Relations Representative and Deidre Cato, Rehabilitation Counselor with the NC Department of Health and Human Services local EIPD office provided an overview of the services available for individuals with disabilities. They help people overcome disability-related barriers and achieve their goals for competitive employment and more independent living in their community. In collaboration with each client, they help assess skills, interests and abilities and choose a goal for competitive employment or independence. Based on the individual's needs, they create a customized plan of services and supports to help them achieve that goal.

A brief discussion followed relating to incentives for businesses partnering with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the opportunity for temporary internships along with the requirements.

Chair Plue commended the information included in the distribution packet and asked how the committee could encourage local employers to adopt open-minded approaches toward candidates with disabilities.

Ms. Ward suggested arranging introductions with potential employers to offer a complimentary Windmills training session. She noted that this no-cost program helps employers overcome stereotypes and understand the business benefits of hiring diverse candidates. The training is flexible and can be delivered in person or virtually by Ms. Ward.

Mr. Belk acknowledged and commended Ms. Ward and Ms. Cato for their ongoing efforts to expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Item No. 3 Voluntary Disability Decals Discussion Chair Plue noted the absence of two members and stated that no formal action would be taken on the agenda item. She provided a brief informational overview for Mr. Belk and indicated that she would email the full details to all members to allow everyone an opportunity to review and provide input. The item will be moved to the September meeting agenda.

Item No. 4. Other Business None

The meeting ended at 3:33 p.m.