



Monroe Council Minutes
Work Session
March 10, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.
233 South Main Street, Monroe, Ohio

Mayor Funk opened the work session at 5:32 p.m.

Present were: Keith Funk, Mayor; Christina McElfresh, Vice Mayor; Todd Hickman, Council Member; Tom Hagedorn, Council Member; Molly Cloyd, Council Member; Jordan Brown, Council Member; Michael Graves, Council Member; Larry Lester, City Manager; Kacey Waggaman, Assistant City Manager; Gary Morton, Director of Public Works; Jake Burton, Director of Finance; Tom Smith, Director of Development; Seth Geisler, Economic Development; Jameson Cole, Planner; and Beth Combs, Clerk of Council.

Mr. Lester opened up for questions about the agenda for Council's regular session. There were none.

Mr. Lester generally discussed future legislation that will be presented to Council, most of which are Public Works, which have been identified in the capital program, including ADA program, paving bid, and design of Riverside trail. Mr. Morton explained that there are two projects, one within the park referred to as Loop Trail and Riverside Trail. Ms. Cloyd asked for clarity regarding the scope of the upcoming legislation. Mr. Lester explained that those details will all be made available prior to the regular meetings, this update is just for Council's awareness.

Mr. Funk opened discussion regarding the school water project. Mr. Lester reported that Council first received information on the project in February. The project involves replacement of approximately 16,000–17,000 feet of water line surrounding the school property to provide adequate flow for the new school and system redundancy, including upgrading to a 12-inch line. The estimated cost, including engineering, is \$7.85 million. Staff presented two options: (1) the City completes the project as it involves public infrastructure, or (2) the school district installs an above-ground water storage tank. Staff recommended that the City proceed with the project, with engineering in 2026 and construction beginning in spring 2027. Direction from Council was requested. If supported, staff will return with proposed legislation and funding options, including potential low-interest loans and grants. This would require a capital budget amendment.

Mr. Hagedorn inquired whether the design would function as a closed loop and whether future connections, including along Todhunter Road, would be permitted. Mr. Lester indicated that future connections may occur. Mr. Morton stated that an existing 6-inch line in the area requires upgrading to 12 inches and noted that the school currently operates on a single feed without redundancy. He explained that the school is willing to grant necessary easements, allowing for improved redundancy and compliance with flow requirements. He further stated that the project is driven by school flow needs rather than future development, but would also position the system for a future water tower at Heritage Green within the next 8–10 years.



Ms. Cloyd asked about funding opportunities to complete multiple water-related projects concurrently. Mr. Burton stated that doing so would require significant water rate increases within that timeframe. Ms. Cloyd emphasized the importance of transparent communication to residents regarding phased project implementation. Mr. Funk asked about the cost of a school-installed water storage tank; Mr. Morton responded that it would be several million dollars. Mr. Funk suggested exploring whether the school could secure grants or subsidies through its construction project and potentially share funding to offset City costs. Mr. Lester stated he would follow up with the school. Mr. Brown asked whether the project would resolve all water issues for the new school; Mr. Morton confirmed it would address current flow deficiencies and support future growth. Mrs. McElfresh expressed support for the upgrades and inquired about the service area of a future water tower. Mr. Morton stated that the entire system would benefit and clarified that the water tower is separate from the school project alternatives.

Mr. Hickman questioned the City's investment in infrastructure located in Lemon Township, noting the potential for non-City residents to access the system without paying City taxes. Mr. Morton explained that the upgrade is necessary to serve the east pressure zone and is the only viable source. Mr. Funk confirmed that the City would retain ownership and functionality of the lines. Mr. Morton noted that existing legislation requires annexation for properties seeking City water service.

Mr. Morton stated that staff is seeking Council's direction to determine which option to advance. Mrs. McElfresh asked about the alternative if the City does not proceed; Mr. Morton stated that the school would not meet flow requirements and would need to install a storage tank. He added that staff initiated review following receipt of the school's system drawings and subsequent flow testing, which identified underperforming lines. The City is currently 6–8 months ahead of schedule to align with the school's plans.

Mrs. McElfresh asked whether additional easements would be required from property owners. Mr. Morton stated that the project would utilize existing easements and school property, with the school already in agreement. He reviewed the proposed improvements using a system map, including line upgrades, tie-ins, and redundancy measures. Mr. Lester clarified that the issue is related to flow, not overall capacity. Ms. Cloyd asked about the need for a future water tower in relation to growth or additional school facilities. Mr. Morton explained that regulatory requirements call for one day of water storage; the City is currently near, but not exceeding, capacity. Mr. Lester reiterated the need for Council acknowledgment to proceed. Mr. Graves recommended that staff continue discussion in work sessions and seek formal direction at a regular Council meeting.

Mr. Lester opened discussion regarding mowing contracts. He noted several considerations, including union versus non-union wage structures, the requirements to establish an internal mowing crew, and the history of the JEDD agreement (2014), which may be utilized for interchange maintenance. He further explained that many contractors operate using short-term equipment leases, whereas the City typically purchases equipment, and that larger landscaping firms often produce their own mulch, creating pricing advantages that are difficult for municipalities to match, even at wholesale rates.

Ms. Cloyd inquired as to the number of contractors currently utilized; Mr. Lester responded that the City contracts with two companies. Ms. Cloyd suggested that consolidating to a single contractor may improve cost efficiency and emphasized the importance of transparency so residents are aware of the City's



vendors. Mr. Lester noted that services are procured through a competitive bidding process and that interchange work includes additional irrigation components, but acknowledged the value of evaluating these considerations in future contracting.

Regarding the Lemon Township Public Works services agreement, Mr. Lester reviewed cost data utilizing ODOT rates. He reported that services are estimated at approximately \$105,000 annually. He noted that the past two winters have been more severe than typical, and that average seasonal snow and ice control costs would likely be \$10,000 to \$15,000 lower, resulting in an estimated annual cost closer to \$95,000 under normal conditions. Mr. Brown requested historical data for comparison. Mr. Funk stated that this analysis is a useful exercise and should be conducted periodically to determine whether rate adjustments are warranted. Mr. Brown expressed concern regarding potential subsidization by City residents for services provided to Lemon Township. Mrs. McElfresh stated that the agreement appears to be cost-neutral overall and emphasized the value of the City's partnership with Lemon Township. Mr. Funk added that many City residents benefit from these services through regular use of the serviced areas. Mr. Brown reiterated that, from a business perspective, the arrangement currently reflects a net loss.

Councilmembers shared general feedback to improve future work sessions.

Mrs. McElfresh moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Hagedorn. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The work session adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Combs
Clerk of Council