

GUEST COLUMN

For the Sunday, July 4, 2010 Edition
From: Mayor James E. "Jamie" Mayo

Projects Underway: Clearing the Path for Development

The Monroe City Council and I wish a Happy 4th of July to all of our citizens. I want to encourage you all to take a moment to reflect upon the many rights and privileges we enjoy as American citizens. The freedoms we enjoy came with a cost. Also, enjoy this time with your family and loved ones, and make some great memories. These are the days we will all look back upon years from now and tell wonderful stories about.

I want to take a few moments to inform our citizens about many projects that are being developed or worked on at this time. All of these infrastructure projects will help pave a path for future economic development.

Oliver Road Expansion: This estimated \$1.7 million dollar project received a notice to proceed on June 20, 2010. Our goal is to widen the section of Oliver Road in between Forsythe and Tower Drive. The current two-lane street will be widened to three lanes and include a turning lane at Forsythe Avenue. We expect construction to take approximately 90 working days to complete (weather permitting).

US 165 South Business Connector: This project has over \$3.5 million dollars allocated for it. We are near completion of the right-of-way acquisition needed for us to widen Ticheli Road into a scenic boulevard from U.S. 165 South to the zoo entrance. Our goal is to submit plans and specifications to Louisiana State Facilities & Planning by sometime in August. The Louisiana Purchase Gardens & Zoo is the #1 tourist attraction in Northeast Louisiana and a much needed facelift will help improve access and make the venue more attractive.

Tower Drive Connector: This estimated \$9 million dollar project will help improve traffic congestion on Louisville and Forsythe Avenue. We are still in the process of acquiring the necessary right-of-way between Lamy Lane and U.S. 165. Our goal is to expand the current two-lane road into a three-lane road. We expect to be ready for advertising by fall 2010.

Automated Water Meter Reading: We are in the process of receiving Requests for Proposals (RFP's) for this project advertised in June 2010. We expect to receive RFP's by mid July and then engineers will assess the proposals and make a recommendation to the City Council. The project calls for us to install new automated water meter systems into all homes and businesses in Monroe. This is another important step to help upgrade our entire water system. The Environmental Protection Agency has agreed to allow us to use this project to complete the "supplemental environmental" project section mandated in our current Consent Decree.

Stimulus Projects: The City of Monroe is utilizing over \$1.3 million dollars in Stimulus funds to complete the following projects:

Washington Street Project – Expected to proceed in July and will involve the removal of deteriorated street surface and replace it with concrete surfacing. It will range from Walnut to North 14th Street. The project is expected to be complete in mid-October (weather permitting).

Riverside Drive Project – Scheduled to begin this week and will involve the removal of deteriorated street sections, a rebuild and overlay with asphaltic concrete pavement. It will range from Park Avenue to Louisville Avenue. The project should take about 20 working days (weather permitting).

Despite many challenges, our city continues working hard to bring important infrastructure improvements. The City Council and I have said many times, our goal is to "lay the foundation for generations of growth and development". These aforementioned infrastructure projects will help us accomplish that goal. Together, we are stronger. Monroe is one city, with one future!