

GUEST COLUMN
For
The Monroe Dispatch
Submitted by: Mayor James E. "Jamie" Mayo
For the June 28, 2018 Edition

The I's Have it: INFRASTRUCTURE

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of attending the 86th annual meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors. Nearly 250 mayors from cities with a population of 30,000+ met in Boston, Massachusetts, for the four-day gathering. A major focus of this year's conference was on INCLUSION, INFRASTRUCTURE and INNOVATION.

Last week we discussed inclusion. This week, I want to talk about INFRASTRUCTURE.

Infrastructure is a challenging issue for every city in the country. Regardless of population size, everyone must deal with costly roads, bridges, water, and sewer projects. Aging infrastructure and a lack of funding sources can quickly turn a small issue into a major headache for city leaders.

In Boston, panelists talked about a variety of initiatives, public-private partnerships, funding options and other best practices to tackle this universal problem. Although we sometimes face funding issues, the City of Monroe is ahead of many cities across the country as it relates to being able to do infrastructure projects. Thanks to the leadership of former-Mayor Bob Powell, his administration and our voters, we passed a Street Tax in 1994. Then, my fellow councilmen and I worked with former-Mayor Melvin Rambin and his administration to rededicate that tax in 2000. The measure passed with 82% of the vote.

Thanks to the support of our residents, Monroe has been able to do millions of dollars in new or improvement projects for our roads, bridges, water, and sewer plant. We have been able to pay for some projects outright, while using our local dollars as matching funds leveraged against state or federal dollars for other projects.

Thanks to community support and city council approval of our new water/sewer rates, we will be able to do an estimated \$60M in water system projects that will upgrade our infrastructure and help us sustain future growth and development. We are thankful for the men and women who serve(d) in our Engineering and Public Works departments, and on our Capitol Infrastructure Commission for the challenging work and visionary leadership they have shown. We may not be able to do everything that we want as quickly as we'd like; but, we do have a mechanism in place that will allow us to remain progressive for years to come.

Inclusion, infrastructure, and innovation. Three keys to the future of every city. Next week, I will talk about INNOVATION. By working together, we are stronger. Monroe is one city, with one future!