

**CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 2, 2021**

Council President Rolling called the regular meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Roll call was as follows:

PRESENT: Peter Lewis Sr., John Botsford, Cody Ludwig, Mark W. Verret, Rick Smith and Larry Rolling

ABSENT: Joey Roberts

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Mark R. Johnson, Chief Administrative Officer Erin Bivona, City Attorney Rod Rodrigue and Police Chief Stephen Culotta

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mrs. JoAnn Rucker.

RESIGNATION OF COUNCIL CLERK

Council President Rolling announced that Council Clerk Bonnie Champagne submitted her resignation effective February 5, 2021.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW COUNCIL CLERK

Council President Rolling made a motion to appoint JoAnn Rucker as the new Council Clerk effective February 8, 2021, seconded by Councilman Smith. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to appoint JoAnn Rucker as the new Council Clerk effective February 8, 2021.

Council members thanked Bonnie for her dedication to the City of Covington over the past 13 years.

Former Councilman at Large Sam O’Keefe thanked Bonnie for her service to the City of Covington and City Council.

Council President Rolling presented Bonnie with a memento from the City of Covington and City Council in appreciation for her years of service.

Councilwoman Ludwig presented Bonnie with a bouquet of flowers from the City Council.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilman Botsford. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to adopt the consent calendar. The consent calendar was adopted.

REGULAR AGENDA

Unfinished Business

Items to be voted on:

1. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2021-01-01 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Renaming the Street Known as Hebert Lane, Which Street is Located between East 10th Avenue and East 12th Avenue and East of South Louisiana Street and West of South New Hampshire Street, as South Vermont Street (Verret)

Councilman Verret led a discussion on Item No. 2021-01-01.

Councilman Verret made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilman Botsford. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Item No. 2021-01-01, seconded by Councilman Botsford. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2021-01-01. Item No. 2021-01-01 was adopted.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Council District and Committee Reports

1. District A –

Councilman Lewis welcomed JoAnn to the Council. Also, he thanked everyone who participated in the MLK program and reminded any participants and vendors who may be interested in future events to submit their registration timely. Also, he announced some upcoming events: planning is underway for the Juneteenth event; a Resource and Health Fair will be held in April or May; and he's working with a group of individuals from the community to plan a community dance with a Victorian-style theme. He mentioned that volunteers are needed for all these events and encouraged anyone interested to contact him. Also, he's working on bringing better housing and rental assistance to the residents of District A and will update the Council and Administration on this initiative. Also, he's working with a non-profit organization to offer programs and resources for the homeless in the City of Covington and throughout St. Tammany Parish.

2. District B –

Councilman Botsford provided an update from the Northshore Food Bank: they have served 1,656 homes this year, which is a 32% increase over last year; they have provided 1,902 food boxes this year, which is a 37% increase over last year; they have widened their spectrum of drop-off locations for donations and encouraged the public to donate as they are able; they encourage businesses to hold virtual food drives; and the organizers of the Rollin' on the 3 Rivers House Float event have announced that the Northshore Food Bank will be one of their beneficiaries. Also, he encouraged the public to support our local businesses and shop locally.

3. District C – Absent.

4. District D –

Councilwoman Ludwig mentioned that as of today, St. Tammany Parish Hospital reported 43 COVID-positive inpatient cases. She added that the hospital has begun administering the vaccine to people at least 70 years of age and appointments are required. Upcoming events: (1) Chillin' at the River concert by Four Unplugged on Thursday, February 11th at 5:15 pm in Bogue Falaya Park; and (2) a public workshop on the Covington Comprehensive Plan 2030 on Monday,

February 8th at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers with another public workshop tentatively scheduled on February 22nd and the public hearing and adoption of the Plan on March 15th. Also, she mentioned that the St. Patrick's Day parade will not be held in March due to COVID restrictions but she looks forward to the 2022 event.

5. District E –

Councilman Verret welcomed JoAnn to her new position and looks forward to working with her.

6. At Large (Smith) –

Councilman Smith welcomed JoAnn and looks forward to working with her. Also, he commended and thanked the Public Works Department for their ongoing efforts throughout the City. Also, he urged the public to support the local businesses since most of them have experienced a decrease in business during the pandemic. Also, he encouraged the public to continue to follow the government protocol and stay safe.

7. At Large (President) –

Council President Rolling commented that the house floats look great and thanked City residents and businesses who have participated in the event. He added that the Carnival in Covington Committee is starting to plan and organize the 2022 events and looks forward to an exciting celebration next year. He thanked Councilman Lewis and the City as well as Aimee Faucheux and her department for their efforts in planning and organizing the MLK event. Also, he reminded everyone that Keep Covington Beautiful will be sponsoring a Paper-Shredding Day on Saturday, April 24th.

Council President Rolling acknowledged and thanked State Representative Mark Wright for being in the audience this evening.

State Representative Mark Wright thanked Bonnie for her service to the City of Covington.

Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Johnson

- (a) He expressed his gratitude to Bonnie for her service to the City of Covington;
- (b) He congratulated JoAnn for being appointed as the new Council Clerk;
- (c) He mentioned that the City has been quite active during the past 60 days regarding infrastructure improvements. He expressed kudos to City Engineer Callie Baker for getting the following engineering and construction contracts underway:

- (1) LA Hwy 21/Boston Street – the contract has been sent out for the engineering design. He thanked Senator Patrick McMath and Representative Mark Wright for the funding. Also, he mentioned that the City has no money budgeted to repave any of our other downtown or Division of Spring streets. He plans to continue to focus on repairing, replacing and lining our aging and leaky sewer lines;

- (2) The construction of a new water line on 14th Avenue between Jefferson and Jahncke;

- (3) To update the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) chlorine system maintenance and to repair the screening apparatus at the WWTP;

- (4) To hire engineers to calculate the load bearing of all bridges pursuant to state law which requires this calculation be performed every two years;

- (5) To repair the drainage culverts and sewer lines on Lockwood between Columbia Street and Florida Street due to damage caused by the crepe myrtle roots;
- (6) Miscellaneous repairs (Phase 1) per 2016 engineering study for WWTP;
- (7) To replace the aging generator at the WWTP;
- (8) To extend the water line on Philip Drive to provide water to Fire Station #2;
- (9) For safety striping on 15th Avenue from Hubie Gallagher to River Forest and the first block of 15th Avenue on the west side of South Tyler Street;
- (10) For engineering design for replacement of Lurline Drive from Karen Drive to Division Street;
- (11) To repair the sewer line breaks along Lurline Drive prior to replacing street;
- (12) To install guard rails for 15th Avenue/Rattle Snake Branch Bridge per state engineering requirements;
- (13) For engineering design for replacement of Columbia Street/Mile Branch Bridge;
- (14) The all abilities access path along the riverside of Bogue Falaya Park is coming in under budget and unused grant funds are being applied to extending the path behind the playground along Mackie Creek;

He stated that as a rule, he does not offer timelines for completion of projects. It is his experience that such estimates are seldom correct, create false expectations and disappointment.

- (d) He gave a shout-out to Chief Administrative Officer Erin Bivona, Director of Finance Stephen Sanders, Public Works Director Chris Davis and City Attorney Rod Rodrigue for their efforts in preparing, reviewing and finalizing the engineering and construction contracts;
- (e) He reminded everyone about the Chillin' on the River concert by Four Unplugged on Thursday, February 11th at 5:15pm in Bogue Falaya Park;
- (f) He recognized Code Enforcement Officer Wayne Mayberry for his quick response when he happened upon a car teetering into a ditch. When Wayne noticed the driver still inside the vehicle, he lifted her through the window to safety. The City commends Wayne for his efforts;
- (g) He reminded everyone that a volunteer group of bluegrass pickers performs live music every Wednesday morning at the Farmer's Market at the Trailhead. Also, he reminded everyone about the Farmer's Market every Saturday morning across from Cemetery #1;
- (h) He reminded the public that plastic newspaper and grocery bags are not recyclable and should not be included in the curbside recycle bins; and
- (i) He gave an update on the "Slow Your Roll" campaign and discussed some data recently collected by the Police Department.

Councilman Botsford requested an update from Mayor Johnson on the improvements to Ozone Park.

Mayor Johnson stated that there is some preliminary work being performed on the Ozone Park improvement project, but due to the number of current ongoing projects, he does not have a timeline for the start of the Ozone Park improvement project.

Councilman Lewis commented it was his understanding that the Ozone Park improvements project was planned before all the other projects.

Mayor Johnson responded that his Administration inherited these projects and at this time, plans have not been drawn for the Ozone Park improvement project.

Councilman Lewis and Mayor Johnson discussed some of Mayor Johnson's comments with regard to the ongoing projects.

2. Erin Bivona, Chief Administrative Officer – None.

Council President Rolling reminded everyone that the March Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 2nd at 6pm in the Council Chambers pending current COVID restrictions.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55pm.

/s/ _____
LARRY ROLLING
Council President

/s/ _____
JOANN RUCKER
Council Clerk