

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

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

Roll call was as follows:

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

ABSENT: None

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 Mr. Wayne Mayberry.

APPEARERS

Councilman Smith introduced Mrs. Christy Atkinson, Regional Director, of the American Heart Association. Mrs. Atkinson gave a background of the AHA and announced that the 2021 Northshore Heart Walk will be on Saturday, May 08, 2021 in downtown Covington. For more information go to www.NorthshoreHeartWalk.org.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. Roll Call: Yeas-7 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. 2021-02-01-An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Covington Code of Ordinances: Chapter 14. Animals, Article I. In General, Section 14-10. Public Nuisance (Smith)

Rod Rodrigue, City Attorney led the discussion on Item No. 2021-02-01.

After a lengthy discussion between City Council and Staff regarding the merits of the text change. Councilman Verret made a motion to table Item No. 2021-02-01 seconded by Councilman Botsford. Roll Call was unanimous to table Item No. 2021-02-01.

NEW BUSINESS

Items to be voted on:

1. RESOLUTION NO. 2021-03-A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Mayoral Appointment of Michael Hunley to the Covington Historical District Commission (CHDC) for a term of Four (4) Years (Mayor)

Mayor Johnson requested confirmation of his appointment of Michael Hunley to the Covington Historical District Commission for a term of four (4) years.

There were no public comments on Resolution 2021-03.

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2021-03, seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2021-03. Resolution No. 2021-03 was adopted.

2. RESOLUTION NO. 2021-04-A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Reappointment of Lisa Condrey Ward to the Covington Historic District Commission (CHDC) for an Additional Term of Four (4) Years (Mayor)

Mayor Johnson requested confirmation of his appointment of Lisa Condrey Ward to the Covington Historical District Commission for an additional term of four (4) years.

There were no public comments on Resolution 2021-04.

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2021-04, seconded by Councilman Ludwig. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2021-04. Resolution No. 2021-04 was adopted.

3. RESOLUTION NO. 2021-05-A Resolution of the Covington City Council Recognizing the Mayor's Authority to Sign a Lease Purchase Agreement for the Purpose of Procuring "Public Works Department" (Spider Machine) for the Covington Public Works Department (Verret)

Mayor Johnson led a discussion on Resolution No. 2021-05.

Mr. Lance Bonham, a resident in the City of Covington questioned if the new Spider Machine was a leasing or purchasing option.

Mrs. Erin Bivona, Chief Administrative Officer stated after researching the options with the Stephen Sanders, Director of Finance, the lease purchase agreement was the best choice.

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution 2021-05, seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll Call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2021-05. Resolution No. 2021-05 was adopted.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Council District and Committee Reports

1. District A-

Councilman Lewis reminded the public to go to www.covla.com and view the Covington 2030 Comprehensive Plan. Also, he announced some upcoming events:

The NAACP Meeting will be on March 09, 2021 at 7:00PM.; On March 04, 2021 at 3:00pm, the Northshore Regional Alliance will be hosting a zoom housing tour that will be discussing housing and transportation issues on the Northshore; On April 15, 2021 from 4:00-6:00pm the Covington Housing Allowance will meet discussing the housing issues within District A. There will be a limit to 15 people and a zoom meeting may be offered also. The place of the meeting has not been determined yet; The Heart of the Matter Organization meeting is held every Tuesday at 9:00am via Zoom; Councilman Lewis's Poverty Meeting meets every 2nd and 4th Thursday at 10:00am via Zoom. For more information on these meetings please contact Councilman Lewis: Councilman Lewis stated he has reached out to Mr. Jordon Johnson, who has been appointed to the St. Tammany Parish School Board Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Committee. The Meeting will be on March 16, 2021 to discuss issues in the school system. Mr. Johnson can be reached at JordonJohnson318@gmail.com; Volunteers and Participants are still needed for Juneteenth.

2. District B –

Councilman Botsford asked Councilman Lewis the dates of Juneteenth. He stated the dates are June 18-19, 2021. Councilman Botsford provided an update from the Northshore Food Bank; 1368 households have received assistance which is up 13%. 1531 food boxes were distributed which is up 17%. The items needed are tomato sauce, canned peas, macaroni and cheese, cereal and peanut butter. Also, the brand new retail shop is very nice and Councilman Botsford encourage everyone if they have a chance to stop by; A reminder to shop local.

3. District C-

Councilman Roberts acknowledged that Mayor Mark posted on social media that there is work coming to District C and we are very excited to see some things happening and coming back to normal; Councilman Roberts asked Mayor Johnson that in his comments, could he talk about the control outages that everyone experienced and how the City of Covington was not responsible. Some of the outages were misunderstood in that Cleco was controlling what power outages were taking place if the Mayor could elaborate on that.

4. District D-

Councilwoman Ludwig is happy to report that St Tammany Parish Hospital is down to 15 patients in Covid care. Councilman Ludwig also stated that Melissa Hodgson, AVP of Communications at St Tammany Parish Hospital encourages everyone to get their Covid vaccine as soon as they become eligible for this is the only way out of the pandemic. Covington residents can stay up to date with the latest vaccine news by visiting St.Tammany.health/vaccine. Upcoming Events; Coffee with the Mayor, March 09, 2021 at 9:00am in the Bogue Falaya Hall. There is going to be limited capacity so please register; The Comprehensive Plan 2030 meeting will be held March 15, 2021 at the City of Covington Council Chamber; The Four Unplugged Concert will be on March 17, 2021 at the Bogue Falaya Park from 5:30-8:30pm. Please note the time change for this is a little friendlier for the people coming home from work; Zumba with the Mayor will be held on March 21, 2021 at 12:00pm in the Bogue Falaya Hall. This is a free event.

5. District E-

Councilman Verret stated with the Governor's revised restrictions, there will be additional seating at our local bars and restaurants. Councilman Verret stated he has had several conversations with some of our local business owners, and they have expressed that they desperately need help. He stated, as long as you are

comfortable going out wearing your mask and following the guidelines please help support our local business owners.

6. At Large (Smith)-

Councilman Smith thanked Mrs. Christy Atkinson and stated it would be great if the council could get together as a group and join the Heart Walk. Also, he thanked Chief Cullota for his help with addressing an issue he had this week. Lieutenant Blocker was quick on her response. Also, he commented and thanked the Public Works Department for their ongoing efforts throughout the city. Also, he urged the public to support the local businesses.

7. At Large (President)-

Council President Rolling commented when he started on the council in 2011, he owned his own business and started the Covington Business Workshop Series which was an opportunity to get the business community involved by getting speakers lined up to help their business thrive in the city. This did not happen last year due to Covid. He stated he has talked with Aimee Faucheux who has been a tremendous help in the past and they plan on organizing and starting the series again in the next several months. A date and topic will be available soon. We will have good support from our business community and is a plus for our local businesses. Also, a reminder of the paper shredding day on April 24, 2021 located in the parking lot at City Hall. The location will be verified at the April 13, 2021 Council Meeting. Also, he stated the April 2021 calendar has a lot of events happening in the city. Go to www.covla.com for more information. Also, support our local businesses.

Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Johnson

(a) He announced that concerning the rolling blackouts, this was done by Mid Continent Independent System Operator. When one area needs additional energy, they have the authority to take it from another area. The takeaways from this experience were that it takes more energy and more electricity to heat a home than it does to air condition a home. In the future we hope to get a warning when this happens.

(b) Subsurface drainage and sewer line repairs on Lockwood St. adjacent to the Taproom are going very well.

(c) Sewer point repairs on Lurline Dr. have begun.

(d) He gave a City of Covington financial overview.

(1.) We had 23,700,000.00 flow into our coffers and 23,000,000.00 spent.

(2) The city does not have discretionary income. There are needs that we must respond to. For example: The new Collins Blvd. bridge over the Bogue Falaya has sewer lines, utility lines and water mains that run underneath the bridge. When construction starts, these lines will need to be moved at a cost of approximately one million dollars.

(3) He stated in the future we must expand the flow capacity of the sewer force main from Ronald Reagan Blvd to the wastewater plant which will be several hundred thousand dollars.

(4) He stated the Columbia Street Bridge will also have to be replaced in the future at an approximate cost of one million dollars.

(5) He announced the Covington Police Department has added nine new police officers which will be an expense we have in 2021 that we did not have in 2020. That will be a close to 1.3 million dollars that we will be spending this year. The utility increase that was done this past year is what is making this possible.

(6) He stated we also have a 10-mill millage dedicated to the Fire Department, which is also subsidized by our sales tax and property taxes by approximately one million dollars.

(e) He also pointed out that city employees in many incidences are still not being paid the going rate for what they do.

(f) He stated the playground equipment for Peter Atkins Park is in the bureaucratic procurement process. We are waiting on the 3rd quote for the concrete work before we can begin a contract for that.

(g) He stated regarding the ball field at Ozone, the topography survey work has now been completed. A meeting that was scheduled with the architect to go over the guidelines has been postponed.

(h) He stated the notice received for the repairs on hazardous sidewalks budgeted by the council this year will go into effect on Monday, March 8, 2021.

(j) He stated that the new newsletter will be going out around town. They will be in the green news boxes that say COVLA#. They are available at Covington City Hall, Braswells, Downtown Drugs, Tree of Hope Pheasant, Aquistapaces Grocery, St. John's Coffee, Abita Roasting, and the Covington Trailhead. Inside the back page has a nice calendar that sums up events.

(k) He thanked Kara Craighead, Public Information Administrator on her wonderful job of working with him to put the newsletter together. He also thanked Aimee Faucheux and Bridget Hatty from the cultural Arts and Events Department and, community volunteer Tammy H. Smith on their help. It is a great way to keep up on what's going on around Covington.

(l) He stated we are now in Phase 3 so City Hall will be re-opening tomorrow.

(m) He stated that Councilman Larry Rolling approached him on the status update on the old courthouse on Boston St. which is the Emergency Operation Center. He is pleased to announce that Councilman Rolling will be taking the lead on contacting the Parish on the status update representing the City of Covington. Based on those findings, Councilman Rolling will reconstitute if warranted, the EOC Facility Advisory Committee. He thanked Councilman Rolling.

Councilman Rolling stated he is happy to take the lead.

2. **Erin Bivona, Chief Administrative Officer- None**

Councilman Rolling reminded everyone that the April Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at 6pm. Pending COVID restrictions. This is the second Tuesday not the first due to Easter Holidays.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:07pm.

/s/ _____
LARRY ROLLING
Council President

/s/ _____
JOANN RUCKER
Council Clerk