

**CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 8, 2020**

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

Roll call was as follows:

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

ABSENT: John Botsford

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Mark R. Johnson, Chief Administrative Officer Erin Bivona, City Attorney Rod Rodrigue, Finance Director Stephen Sanders, Police Chief Stephen Culotta, City Planner Nahketah Bagby and JoAnn Rucker, Assistant to City Planner

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Council Clerk Bonnie Champagne.

APPEARERS

1. Council President Rolling introduced Ms. Dana Brown from Dana Brown & Associates, who gave an overview/update of the Covington Comprehensive Plan 2030.

2. Council President Rolling introduced Ms. Marilyn Young, who gave an update on the efforts to clean up and maintain the graves in Wilson Cemetery.

Councilman Lewis thanked Ms. Young for her work to improve Wilson Cemetery. He stated that he plans to meet with Administration to discuss budgeting additional funds for the maintenance and improvement of Wilson Cemetery. Also, he intends to re-establish the Covington Cemetery Advisory Board to manage, maintain and improve all City cemeteries.

(Ms. Danyelle Fabre was scheduled to appear but was unable to attend the meeting.)

3. Councilman Lewis introduced Ms. Karen Gilmore, Ms. Pinky Lewis and Ms. Ashley Russell, who led a discussion about the mission and plans of “One Covington”, which is a non-profit organization created to offer programs on community service, etiquette and proper attire for the youth and teens in the community.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Botsford) 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. 2020-10-01 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Official Zoning Map of the City of Covington, Louisiana, to Reclassify Lot 9 (Off West 9th Avenue), Square 812, Division of New Covington, City of Covington, Parish of St. Tammany, State of Louisiana, From RS-1 (Single-Family Residential) to CO (Commercial Office/Professional) (Zoning Case No. 20-09-03ZC) (Ludwig)

Councilwoman Ludwig led a discussion on Item No. 2020-10-01.

Councilman Roberts made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by **Councilwoman Ludwig**. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Item No. 2020-10-01, seconded by **Councilwoman Ludwig**. Roll call: Yeas – 2 (Verret and Smith); Nays – 4 (Lewis, Roberts, Ludwig and Rolling); Absent – 1 (Botsford) to adopt Item No. 2020-10-01. Item No. 2020-10-01 failed.

2. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2020-11-01 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Covington Code of Ordinances: Chapter 86 Streets, Sidewalks and Other Public Places, Article II. Parades, Festivals and Other Special Events (Rolling)

Council President Rolling led a discussion on Item No. 2020-11-01.

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

Councilman Verret made a motion to adopt Item No. 2020-11-01, seconded by **Councilwoman Ludwig**. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Botsford) to adopt Item No. 2020-11-01. Item No. 2020-11-01 was adopted.

REQUEST TO OPEN AGENDA

Council President Rolling stated that the Council received a request from the Administration to open the agenda to add Resolution No. 2020-32 entitled, “A Resolution of the Covington City Council Authorizing the Mayor to Execute a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Treasury and the State of Louisiana for a Line Item Appropriation in Act 45 of the 2020 Second Extraordinary Legislative Session for Roadway Improvements (Rolling)”

Mayor Johnson stated that through the efforts of State Senator Patrick McMath and State Representative Mark Wright, the City has secured a \$500,000.00 grant to resurface Boston Street from Jefferson Avenue to Lee Lane. Because time is of the essence, he requested that the Council open the agenda to consider this resolution which will give him the authority to execute the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement and upon receipt of the executed agreement, the State Treasurer will disburse the funds to the City.

Councilwoman Ludwig made a motion to open the agenda to add Resolution No. 2020-32, seconded by Councilman Smith. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Botsford) to open the agenda to add Resolution No. 2020-32. The agenda was opened to add Resolution No. 2020-32.

Council President Rolling stated that Resolution No. 2020-32 will be added as Item No. 3 under New Business, Items to be voted on.

New Business

Items to be voted on:

1. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-30 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Accepting the 2019 Audit Report Issued by Carr, Riggs & Ingram, LLC (Smith)

Councilman Smith led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-30.

Ms. Amy Verberne from Carr, Riggs & Ingram, L.L.C. gave a presentation regarding the 2019 audit results.

Ms. Verberne stated that they have issued an unmodified or clean opinion for the City of Covington for the 2019 calendar year.

Mayor Johnson thanked CAO Erin Bivona, Director of Finance Stephen Sanders and the Finance Department for their efforts in compiling the information for the audit.

Council President Rolling made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-30, seconded by Councilman Verret. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Botsford) to adopt Resolution No. 2020-30. Resolution No. 2020-30 was adopted.

2. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-31 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Appointment of Alva Smith as the District B Appointment to the Covington Planning and Zoning Commission to Fill an Unexpired Term (Botsford)

Council President Rolling led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-31.

Councilman Lewis made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-31, seconded by Councilman Smith. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent –1 (Botsford) to adopt Resolution No. 2020-31. Resolution No. 2020-31 was adopted.

City Attorney Rod Rodrigue administered the Oath of Office to Ms. Smith.

Ms. Smith thanked Councilman Botsford for appointing her to the Covington Planning and Zoning Commission and looks forward to serving the citizens of Covington.

3. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-32 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Authorizing the Mayor to Execute a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Treasury and the State of Louisiana for a Line Item Appropriation in Act 45 of the 2020 Second Extraordinary Legislative Session for Roadway Improvements (Rolling)

Council President Rolling led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-32.

Councilman Verret made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-32, seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Botsford) to adopt Resolution No. 2020-32. Resolution No. 2020-32 was adopted.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Council District and Committee Reports

1. District A –

Councilman Lewis mentioned that he continues to receive reports about crime and violence in District A. He led a discussion with Police Chief Culotta and a member of the audience regarding Police Department procedures. Also, he announced some upcoming events: the MLK Service Day will be held on Saturday, January 16, 2021 in the Fuhrmann Auditorium from 11am until 2pm. Also, he announced that as of today, the parade will not take place due to COVID restrictions; Santa's Workshop for small business owners and hosted by Flawed But Fierce Cosmetics and Alexis Essentials will be held on Saturday, December 19th at 2:30pm at Bogue Chitto Park; Naughty or Nice Cocktails and Canvasses hosted by Ravish Boutique and Ever After Boutique will be held on Thursday, December 17th at Ravish Boutique at the Market; and One Covington is hosting a Christmas Decoration Contest in District A for the best decorated home on Sunday, December 20th and prizes will be awarded. He thanked the sponsors for their contributions.

2. District B – Absent.

3. District C –

Councilman Roberts mentioned that some Oak Alley residents have reported speeding in their neighborhood and requested additional police patrols to address the speeding problem. He added that he is aware of the short-staffing issues with the Police Department and appreciates any help that is available. Also, he mentioned that he noticed officers on 15th Avenue and thanked the Police Department for addressing those issues.

Mayor Johnson mentioned that he has compiled a list of "speeding hot spots" throughout the City and the Police Department will be monitoring those areas.

Councilman Roberts thanked Mayor Johnson and Administration for addressing the issues that were reported in the recent meeting with River Forest residents. Also, he gave an update on the Food Bank since Councilman Botsford was absent from the meeting this evening. He mentioned that the Food Bank has had a very busy 2020 and has served over 17,800 households, distributed over 22,000 food boxes and to date, has distributed over 1.1 million pounds of food; due to COVID-19 procedures, the lobby remains closed and operations will be closed the week between Christmas and New Year's; donations are needed, especially canned goods; and he encouraged the public to support the Food Bank. Also, he thanked those individuals who voiced their concerns this evening and spoke on behalf of their community.

4. District D –

Councilwoman Ludwig mentioned that the St. Tammany Parish Library has modified its hours and will be open from 9am until 6pm, Monday through Saturday, and curbside service is still offered. Also, she mentioned that as of today, St. Tammany Parish Hospital had 35 COVID-positive cases and encouraged the public to be responsible during the holiday season. Upcoming events: Candlelight Caroling at the Trailhead on Wednesday, December 9th; Porch Fest

Deux on Saturday, December 12th; and Christmas in the Country in Downtown Covington now through Christmas. Also, she announced that over \$22,000 was raised for the Covington Boys and Girls Club at the recent Otoberfest Beer & Bites Crawl and as a result of the event, approximately \$10,000 was spent in local restaurants and businesses in Downtown Covington.

5. District E –

Councilman Verret commented that the Otoberfest Beer & Bites Crawl was a great event and thanked Councilwoman Ludwig for her efforts. Also, he mentioned that Porch Fest Deux benefitting the Food Bank will be held on Saturday, December 12th and encouraged the public to visit one or all of the five locations to enjoy live music. Also, he wished everyone Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and looks forward to 2021.

6. At Large – (Vice President)

Councilman Smith inquired as to when the Police Department plans to have all positions filled and the number of officers that will be scheduled on each shift.

Police Chief Culotta responded that they plan to schedule five officers plus three traffic officers per shift. Also, he stated that he hopes to have at least three new officers on the road within the next three months and should be fully staffed by August 2021.

Councilman Smith stated that his main priority is a safe city and believes the Police Department has the full support of the Council.

Councilman Smith wished everyone Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Also, he encouraged the public to shop locally to support our local businesses.

7. At Large (President) –

Council President Rolling announced that the Carnival in Covington Committee had planned to honor one healthcare hero from each of the four major hospitals in St. Tammany Parish and they were scheduled to serve as Grand Marshals in the parade. Since the 2021 parade has been cancelled, the four Northshore healthcare heroes will be honored in the 2022 parade.

Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Johnson

(a) He pointed out that prior to the Council adopting the pay increase for the Police Department in August, the Police Department had 13 out of 23 positions were filled. He indicated that the Police Department should be very close to being fully staffed by August 2021.

(b) He thanked the Council for their work and wished everyone a safe and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Council President Rolling reminded everyone that the January Council meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 12th at 6pm in the Council Chambers. Also, he mentioned that the 2021 Council meeting schedule is posted on the City's website.

Council President Rolling wished everyone Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

/s/ _____
LARRY ROLLING
Council President

/s/ _____
BONNIE D. CHAMPAGNE
Council Clerk