

**CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 10, 2020**

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

Roll call was as follows:

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

ABSENT: None

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

Council Vice President Rolling announced that Judge Peter Garcia passed away earlier today and asked everyone to remember Judge Garcia and his family in their thoughts and prayers.

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilman John Botsford.

City Attorney Rod Rodrigue announced that there will be no discussion this evening regarding the merits of whether or not Theard Street or 20th Avenue will be closed. The sole issue on the agenda is a resolution to seek an Attorney General opinion. He stated that if anyone is present to speak for or against the closure of the street, this is not the forum for that discussion. At a subsequent date after the Attorney General has rendered his opinion, the Council will place on the agenda whatever ordinance they seek to consider regarding the street closure.

APPEARERS

1. Council Vice President Rolling introduced Ms. Cathy Lackner, who discussed the Kelly Kicking Cancer non-profit foundation and its mission. She mentioned that one of its fundraisers is a 5K and 1-Mile Fun Run which is scheduled for Saturday, March 21, 2020 at the Covington Trailhead.

2. Councilman Lewis introduced Ms. Lucinda Keller and Ms. Lisa Rustemeyer, who discussed the West 30's Block Party scheduled for Saturday, April 18, 2020 from 1pm until 4pm at Rev. Peter Atkins Park. They invited the community to attend and encouraged support for the block party.

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

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilwoman Ludwig made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilman Botsford. Roll call was unanimous 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. 2020-02-01 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Authorizing the Mayor to Execute a Lease with Baby Lee LLC (Rolling)

City Attorney Rod Rodrigue stated that the City leases several pieces of property to facilitate public parking. With the adoption of this ordinance, Mayor Johnson will be authorized to enter into a lease for property near the Covington Trailhead to be used for public parking.

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

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Item No. 2020-02-01, seconded by Councilwoman Weiss. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2020-02-01. Item No. 2020-02-01 was adopted.

New Business

Items to be voted on:

1. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-04 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Declaring Certain Pieces of Previously Surplused Equipment as “Junk” (Rolling)

City Attorney Rod Rodrigue stated that annually, the City declares various pieces of public property as surplus which is generally property that is no longer needed by the City. He discussed the process required by state statute to declare items as surplus and if the surplus items are not sold at public auction, the process to declare the items as junk in order to dispose of them.

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-04, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-04. Resolution No. 2020-04 was adopted.

2. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-05 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Authorizing the Use of a Portion of the Unconstructed Right of Way on South New Hampshire Street Between East 3rd Avenue and East 4th Avenue as a Driveway (Verret)

Councilman Verret led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-05.

Councilman Roberts made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-05, seconded by Councilwoman Weiss. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-05. Resolution No. 2020-05 was adopted.

3. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-06 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Authorizing the Use of the Unconstructed Public Right of Way on Hebert Lane Between East 10th Avenue and East 12th Avenue as a Driveway (Verret)

Councilman Verret led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-06.

Councilwoman Weiss made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-06, seconded by Councilman Botsford. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-06. Resolution No. 2020-06 was adopted.

4. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-07 – A Resolution of the City of Covington Requesting an Opinion of the Louisiana Attorney General (Rolling)

Council Vice President Rolling read Resolution No. 2020-07 into the record and led a discussion on the resolution.

Councilman Roberts made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-07, seconded by Councilwoman Weiss. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-07. Resolution No. 2020-07 was adopted.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Council District and Committee Reports

1. District A –

Councilman Lewis reminded everyone about the West 30's Block Party scheduled for Saturday, April 18, 2020 from 1pm until 4pm at Rev. Peter Atkins Park.

2. District B –

Councilman Botsford encouraged the public to attend and support the West 30's Block Party on April 18th and the 5K and 1-Mile Fun Run sponsored by Kelly Kicking Cancer on March 21st. Also, he mentioned that the Food Bank's program to deliver food to the elderly is growing and donations are needed.

3. District C –

Councilman Roberts mentioned that the sewer smoke testing is scheduled to begin in River Forest and thanked the Mayor for his attention to the drainage issues. Also, he thanked the public for attending the meeting this evening and for the respect shown to each other.

4. District D –

Councilwoman Ludwig reminded the public about two upcoming events: (1) the Covington Celtic Club parade on Saturday, March 14th; and (2) the Chef Soiree sponsored by the Youth Service Bureau on Sunday, March 15th. Also, she thanked City Attorney Rod Rodrigue for his time and efforts with regard to the St. Peter gate request.

5. District E –

Councilman Verret expressed his condolences to the Garcia family on the passing of Judge Peter Garcia.

6. At Large (Interim) –

Interim Councilwoman at Large Weiss thanked the public for their time and efforts in submitting written comments and for attending the Council meeting to voice their comments regarding City issues.

6. At Large (Vice President) –

Council Vice President Rolling mentioned that the Carnival in Covington celebration was a great event and he thanked the Carnival in Covington Committee as well as the volunteers, sponsors and participants. Also, he thanked the City departments for their help in planning, organizing and coordinating the parade and after-party at the Trailhead.

Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Johnson

- (a) He acknowledged and thanked Councilman Larry Rolling for his efforts over the past few years to improve the Carnival in Covington experience.
- (b) He mentioned that Police Chief Culotta and he will be hosting a workshop on Tuesday, March 24th at 6pm at the Fire House Event Center to meet with retailers in the community to discuss the issue of shoplifting in their stores.
- (c) He announced that after discussions with Coastal Environmental Services, the City will be going to a one-day trash pickup schedule effective Wednesday, April 16th. He reminded everyone that their regular trash will go out on Wednesdays and recycling will go out on Thursdays. He encouraged the public to call either Coastal or City Hall in the event their trash and/or recycling is not picked up.
- (d) He announced some upcoming events:
 - (1) Sunset at the Landing on Friday, March 20th at 6pm;
 - (2) Columbia Street Block Party on Friday, March 27th at 6:30pm; and
 - (3) Histories and Mysteries Tour of the 200 block of North New Hampshire Street on Sunday, March 29th from 3pm until 5pm.
- (e) He mentioned that in response to the Council's recent workshop on utility rate increases and subsequent questions by Councilman Roberts, Utility Billing Manager Cindy Samuel is gathering information on different methods to increase the utility rates reasonably and fairly to residents and businesses. He added that utility rate increases are necessary because the City's cost to provide water and sewer is greater than the monthly utility rates collected for water and sewer.
- (f) He announced that starting next week, the City will begin addressing over 50 sewer line breaks in the downtown area. The project is scheduled to take place over the next several months and asked for the public's patience with any detours that may be necessary.
- (g) He mentioned that the City's Engineering Department has over 60 engineering projects they are trying to oversee on a daily basis. As a result, he stated that no new projects will be considered until some of the current projects have been completed.

2. Erin Bivona, Chief Administrative Officer

Chief Administrative Officer Erin Bivona gave an update on some of the infrastructure initiatives and programs that the City has been working on with LA DOTD and the Louisiana Watershed Initiative. She thanked Grants Manager Kelli Moore, Flood Plain Administrator and Building Official Chris Brown, City Engineer Bob Moeinian and Assistant Director of Public Works David Zechenelly for their help in preparing grant applications for the watershed initiative programs.

Council Vice President Rolling reminded everyone about the election on April 4th with early voting from Saturday, March 21st through Saturday, March 28th, excluding Sunday, March 22nd.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10pm.

LARRY ROLLING

BONNIE D. CHAMPAGNE

Council Vice President

Council Clerk