

**CITY OF COVINGTON  
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 22, 2020  
(POSTPONED FROM SEPTEMBER 15, 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, Rick Smith and Larry Rolling

**ABSENT:** None

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mayor Mark R. Johnson, Chief Administrative Officer Erin Bivona, City Attorney Rod Rodrigue, Police Chief Stephen Culotta, Deputy Chief of Police Joseph “Trey” Mahon, Finance Director Stephen Sanders and Assistant Finance Director Nina Sweeney

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilman Mark Verret.

#### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**Councilman Smith** made a motion to elect Councilman Rolling as President of the Council, seconded by Councilman Verret. There was no discussion by the Council or the public concerning this nomination. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Abstain: 1 (Rolling). Councilman Rolling was elected President of the Council.

**Councilman Botsford** made a motion to elect Councilman Smith as Vice President of the Council, seconded by Councilman Roberts. There was no discussion by the Council or the public concerning this nomination. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Abstain: 1 (Smith). Councilman Smith was elected Vice President of the Council.

#### **APPEARERS**

**1. Council President Rolling** introduced Mrs. Diane Weiss, former Interim Councilwoman at Large, who provided final details on some initiatives that she started while serving as Interim Councilwoman at Large. Also, she thanked Mayor Johnson and Director of Public Works Chris Davis for scheduling the work along the 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue bike path. Also, she commended the Council for its dedication and commitment to the citizens of Covington.

**Council President Rolling** presented Mrs. Weiss with a memento to express the Council’s appreciation for her service.

**2. Councilman Lewis** introduced Ms. Marilyn Young, who discussed the maintenance and upkeep of Cemetery No. 2/Wilson Cemetery over the years and suggested some improvements.

**Councilman Lewis** gave an overview of a recent meeting with City staff in which improvements to Cemetery No. 2/Wilson Cemetery were discussed.

**Mayor Johnson** thanked Ms. Young and Councilman Lewis for presenting the information this evening. He mentioned that he asked Amy Tucker, Facilities Manager, to provide him with a prioritized punch list of needed improvements at Cemetery No. 2/Wilson Cemetery.

**Council Vice President Smith** mentioned that a Cemetery Advisory Board was created during the past Administration. Jan Butler, a former member of the Cemetery Advisory Board, was in the audience and commented on some of the issues with regard to the cemeteries.

**Council President Rolling** suggested that Councilman Lewis work with the Cemetery Advisory Board to evaluate the City cemeteries and recommend improvements.

**3. Police Chief Culotta** introduced our new Deputy Police Chief, Joseph “Trey” Mahon, who expressed his excitement in his new position and looks forward to continuing to serve the citizens of Covington.

#### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

**Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. 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. 2020-08-01** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the 2020 Budget for Removal of Hazardous Trees and Maintenance/Pruning of Live Oak Trees (Ludwig)

**Councilwoman Ludwig** led a discussion on Item No. 2020-08-01.

**Mayor Johnson** commented that the City’s tree canopy is aging and during the first six months of this year, Public Works expended the budgeted funds for the removal of hazardous trees. With the adoption of this budget amendment, funds will be available for Public Works to continue to maintain and remove dangerous limbs and trees for the remainder of this year.

**Councilman Botsford 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.**

**Council Vice President Smith made a motion to adopt Item No. 2020-08-01, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2020-08-01. Item No. 2020-08-01 was adopted.**

##### **New Business**

**Items to be voted on:**

**1. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-18** – A Resolution of the Covington City Council in Support of the 2020-2021 United Way Campaign (Lewis)

**Councilman Lewis** led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-18.

Mr. Michael Williamson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Way of Southeast Louisiana, thanked the Council for its support and for the adoption of the resolution this evening.

**Councilman Roberts** made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-18, seconded by Councilman Verret. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-18. Resolution No. 2020-18 was adopted.

**2. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-19** – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Appointment of Roslyn Hanson to Fill an Unexpired Term as the District C Appointment to the Covington Planning and Zoning Commission (Roberts)

**Councilman Roberts** requested that everyone observe a moment of silence in memory of Ron Vaccaro, who served as the District C appointment to the Planning and Zoning Commission for many years, who passed away recently.

**Councilman Roberts** nominated Roslyn Hanson as the new District C appointment to the Planning and Zoning Commission and requested confirmation by the Council.

**Council Vice President Smith** made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-19, seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-19. Resolution No. 2020-19 was adopted.

**City Attorney Rod Rodrigue** administered the Oath of Office to Mrs. Hanson.

Mrs. Hanson thanked Councilman Joey Roberts and Council Vice President Rick Smith for their support and expressed her appreciation for the appointment. She looks forward to serving on the Planning and Zoning Commission as her mother, Jeannette Hagardorn, did for many years.

**3. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-20** – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Appointment of Corey Himes as the District A Appointment to the Covington Board of Adjustment (Lewis)

**Councilman Lewis** nominated Corey Himes as the new District A appointment to the Board of Adjustment and requested confirmation by the Council.

**Councilman Lewis** made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-20, seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-20. Resolution No. 2020-20 was adopted.

**City Attorney Rod Rodrigue** administered the Oath of Office to Mr. Himes.

Mr. Himes thanked Councilman Peter Lewis for the nomination and the Council for its support. He looks forward to serving the community on the Board of Adjustment.

**4. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-21** – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Appointing a Trustee of the St. Tammany Public Trust Financing Authority and Designating his Term of Office (Rolling)

**City Attorney Rod Rodrigue** gave a brief history of the St. Tammany Public Trust Financing Authority and stated that due to some outstanding indebtedness of the Authority, a trustee must be appointed.

**Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-21, seconded by Councilman Verret. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Abstain – 1 (Smith) to adopt Resolution No. 2020-21. Resolution No. 2020-21 was adopted.**

**5. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-22** – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Authorizing the Mayor to Execute an Amendment to the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with St. Tammany Parish Hospital District No. 1 Previously Authorized via Ordinance No. 2019-06 (Ludwig)

**Councilwoman Ludwig** led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-22.

**City Attorney Rod Rodrigue** gave a brief explanation of the reasons for the Amendment to the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement.

**Councilman Verret made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-22, seconded by Council Vice President Smith. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-22. Resolution No. 2020-22 was adopted.**

**6. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-23** – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Authorizing the Cancellation of Two Water Tower Maintenance Contracts (Rolling)

**Council President Rolling** led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-23.

**Chief Administrative Officer Erin Bivona** stated that the City would like to re-procure the maintenance contracts for two water towers due to the length of time the contracts have been in effect and also due to the increased cost for the services.

**Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-23, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-23. Resolution No. 2020-23 was adopted.**

**7. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-24** – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Authorizing the Mayor to Execute a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with St. Tammany Parish Government for Restoration of a Berm on the W-4 Canal/Mile Branch Creek (Rolling)

**Council President Rolling** led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-24.

**Mayor Johnson** stated that the restoration of the berm is necessary to protect two homes that have flooded many times when the Mile Branch comes out of its banks. He mentioned that the State of Louisiana dedicated the right of way of Mile Branch to St. Tammany Parish many years ago and the City must have permission from the Parish to restore the berm. Also, he stated that this Cooperative Endeavor Agreement gives the City the permission to rebuild the berm without taking responsibility for the future maintenance of Mile Branch.

**Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-24, seconded by Council Vice President Smith. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-24. Resolution No. 2020-24 was adopted.**

**8. RESOLUTION NO. 2020-25** – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Adopting the 2020 St. Tammany Parish Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (Rolling)

**Council President Rolling** led a discussion on Resolution No. 2020-25.

**City Building Official Chris Brown** gave an overview of the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.

**Councilman Verret made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2020-25, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2020-25. Resolution No. 2020-25 was adopted.**

## **COMMENTS AND REPORTS**

### **Council District and Committee Reports**

#### **1. District A –**

**Councilman Lewis** announced some upcoming events: (1) the NAACP and the St. Tammany Parish District Attorney will be offering a free, one-day community court event on October 17<sup>th</sup> entitled, the “Warrant Clinic”, which will help local citizens work toward having their suspended driver’s licenses reinstated; (2) voter registration will take place this Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, in Peter Atkins Park. The deadline to register to vote in person is October 5<sup>th</sup> and the deadline to register to vote online is October 13<sup>th</sup>. He reminded everyone to vote in the upcoming election with early voting being held from October 16<sup>th</sup> through October 27<sup>th</sup> or on Election Day, November 3<sup>rd</sup>; and (3) the City is organizing a “Wilson Cemetery Community Cleanup Day” on Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup> from 9am until noon. Everyone is invited to help out and cleaning supplies will be provided.

#### **2. District B –**

**Councilman Botsford** encouraged the public to shop local and support our local businesses. Also, he mentioned that the Food Bank is still serving more families than pre-COVID and invited everyone to visit the new Resale Shop. He mentioned that donations are needed and encouraged the public to support the Food Bank.

#### **3. District C –**

**Councilman Roberts** mentioned that some work is underway on Patricia Drive and expressed his appreciation to the Mayor and Administration. Also, he thanked City residents for being proactive and cleaning out the drainage ways in anticipation of the recent storms. Also, he thanked Diane Weiss, who is a District C resident, for her service to the community and commended Mrs. Roslyn Hanson for her appointment to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

#### **4. District D –**

**Councilwoman Ludwig** gave an update from Tammany Parish Hospital: as of September 21<sup>st</sup>, they have eight COVID-positive cases and are hopeful the number will continue to decline; flu season is approaching and they encouraged everyone to get flu shots; STPH was recently named a Guardian of Excellence by Press Ganey, which is an award for patient experience in the Women's Pavilion and employee engagement systemwide; construction on their Cancer Center is underway and is scheduled to open next summer; and the Covington Clinic in front of Flowers Estates is opening soon and will be the new home for St. Tammany Pediatrics, STHS Pediatric Therapy, the Parenting Center and a new Express Care clinic. Upcoming events: the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Quack-a-Falaya race benefiting the Covington Boys and Girls Club, the Miracle League and Keep Covington Beautiful will be held on Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 9am in the Bogue Falaya Park; Sunset at the Landing concert will be held on Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup> at the Columbia Street Landing; and the Downtown Covington Pumpkin Stroll Shop & Dine event hosted by the Southern Hotel will take place from October 29<sup>th</sup> through November 1<sup>st</sup>.

**5. District E –**

**Councilman Verret** reminded everyone about the upcoming election and to be mindful of the deadlines. Also, he commended Councilman Lewis for his efforts in organizing a voter registration drive. Also, he acknowledged and thanked Philip Smith, who was in the audience this evening and who was appointed as the District E appointment to the Planning and Zoning Commission during a Zoom meeting earlier this year.

**6. At Large – (Vice President)**

**Council Vice President Smith** congratulated and thanked Philip Smith, Corey Himes and Roslyn Hanson for their appointments and for their willingness to serve the citizens of Covington.

**7. At Large (President) –**

**Council President Rolling** mentioned that the Council is now in place and appreciates the hard work of each Council member. Also, he announced that the ninth Covington Business Resource Workshop for local businesses is in the early planning stages and hopefully will be held in the spring of 2021. Also, he announced that the Carnival in Covington Committee continues to move forward with plans for Carnival 2021 and will monitor the current guidelines and restrictions. He hopes to release more information in December.

**Administrative Comments and Reports**

**1. Mayor Johnson**

(a) He mentioned that the City was contacted by some very talented musicians and will be forming the Covington Concert Band. Applications will be taken over the next month and rehearsals will begin in November. Concerts will be held throughout the year.

**Council President Rolling** mentioned that the first concert of the Covington Concert Band will be during the Carnival/Mardi Gras season.

(b) He announced that City Hall was reopened to the public this morning and mentioned that the interior of the building received a fresh coat of paint during the shutdown.

(c) He gave a brief summary of the City's sales tax revenue for the past few months as compared to the same time last year:

- March – decreased by 2%
- April – increased by 2%

- May – increased by 6%
- June – increased by 9%
- July – increased by 7%

(d) He mentioned that as a result of the recent pay raise for the Police Department and the changes to the physical training test, the City has received 49 applications over the past few weeks for positions with the Police Department. He commended the Council for approving the Police Department’s pay raise and commented that the City is heading in a positive direction.

(e) He mentioned that the City has launched a new user-friendly website and encouraged the public to visit the site.

(f) He announced that the City has launched a “well-check program” in which the Fire Department visits homebound seniors prior to a storm to make sure they are safe and have all the necessary supplies. In the event the City is hit by a storm, the Fire Department will return to check on the individuals when it is safe to do so.

(g) He announced that in light of the threats from the recent tropical storms, Covington is now a no-wake zone which means when there is water crossing the streets, residents are asked not to drive through the water. If it is absolutely necessary, residents are asked to be aware of the wake their car creates and it can easily roll up into someone’s garage, home or business.

**Councilman Botsford** mentioned in light of the CDC’s recommendation to cancel Halloween, he inquired as to whether or not Mayor Johnson had made a decision about Halloween in the city limits of Covington.

**Mayor Johnson** responded that he plans to review the current guidelines and restrictions and make his decision. He pointed out that cultural events are very important to our quality of life and mental health and the City has been very careful to choose events in which participants have had ample space to socially distance themselves.

**Council President Rolling** reminded everyone about some important dates:

- The October Council meeting has been changed from Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup> until Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> at 6pm in the Council Chambers;
- The 2021 Budget Work Session will be held on Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup> at 5pm in the Council Chambers. If needed, the review of the budget will continue on Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup> at 5pm in the Council Chambers;
- The November Council meeting has been changed from Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup> until Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 6pm in the Council Chambers;
- There is no change in the date of the December meeting. It will be held on December 8<sup>th</sup> at 6pm in the Council Chambers.

**City Attorney Rod Rodrigue** explained that due to the postponement of the September 15<sup>th</sup> meeting until tonight, the date of the October meeting had to be changed due to publication delays in connection with the ordinance to adopt the bond millage rates for this year.

## **2. Erin Bivona, Chief Administrative Officer –**

**Mrs. Bivona** introduced our new Assistant Director of Finance, Anita “Nina” Sweeney, and welcomed her to the City.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
**LARRY ROLLING**  
Council President

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
**BONNIE D. CHAMPAGNE**  
Council Clerk