

CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

July 13, 2021

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

Roll call was as follows:

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

ABSENT: Joey Roberts, Cody Ludwig,

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

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by **Ms. Cindy Samuel**.

Councilwoman Ludwig arrived at the meeting at 6:02 P.M.

I. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A. Council President-

Councilman at Large Rick Smith nominated **Councilman at Large Larry Rolling** for **Council President**. **Councilman Botsford** seconded the motion. **Roll Call: Yeas-5 Nays-0 Abstained-1. Councilman Rolling** was elected **President of the Covington City Council**.

B. Council Vice President-

Councilman at Large Larry Rolling nominated **Councilman at Large Rick Smith** for **Council Vice President**. **Councilman Botsford** seconded the motion. **Roll Call: Yeas-5 Nays-0 Abstained-1. Councilman Smith** was elected **Vice-President of the Covington City Council**.

APPEARERS

Councilman Vice President Verret introduced Bryan Burns-West 30's Redemption Company. Mr. Burns gave a history and overview of the company stating their mission is to seek to help families through the blessing of home ownership in the West 30's neighborhood. There was an extensive discussion between the Council and Mr. Burns on the qualifications and types of financing available to acquire ownership of the homes being offered .

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by **Councilman Botsford**. **Roll Call: Yeas-6 Nays-0 Absent-1** to adopt the consent calendar. The consent calendar was adopted.

REGULAR AGENDA

Unfinished Business

Items to be voted on:

1. PUBLIC HEARING ACTION ON NO. 2021-06-01-(Amended) An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Covington Code of Ordinances Chapter 102. Vegetation Article I. Trees on Private property Section 102-4. Limitations and Section 102-5. Mitigation and Section 102-7. (d) Violations and Penalties. (Roberts)

Councilman Rolling read the amended part of the Ordinance.

Councilman Verret introduced the Ordinance due to Councilman Roberts absent and asked **City of Covington Building Official, Chris Brown** to explain and answer any questions pertaining to this Ordinance.

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

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Item No. 2021-06-01 **seconded by Councilman Ludwig**. **Roll Call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2021-06-01. Item No. 2020-06-01 was adopted.**

2. PUBLIC HEARING ACTION ON NO. 2021-06-02-An Ordinance of the City of Covington Levying, Imposing and adopting the Millage Rates on all Property Subject to Taxation in the City of Covington, State of Louisiana, for the Year 2021. (Smith)

Councilman Smith gave an overview of the proposed Ordinance.

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

Councilman Verret made a motion to adopt Item No. 2021-06-02 **seconded by Councilman Smith**. **Roll Call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2021-06-02. Item No. 2020-06-02 was adopted.**

NEW BUSINESS

A. Items removed from the consent calendar: None.

B. Items to be voted on: None

C. Items for discussion: None.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Council District and Committee Reports:

1. District A-

Councilman Lewis thanked everyone who donated and participated in the Juneteenth Celebration. He stated it turned out to be a great event and he was very pleased.

2. District B –

Councilman Botsford gave an update from the Food Bank of Covington. He stated that the Food Bank will be opening on the second and fourth Saturday of every month starting on July 10, 2021. They will be open from 9:00am to 12:00 noon for food distribution and food donations. The Food Bank has also started T-2 boxes for people who have diabetes, allergies and special food needs. There will be whole grain and low sodium items in these boxes. The food bank program SOS(Stock Our Shelves) is working with the blood center for promotions. There are a number of locations holding these drives throughout the city. The summer months are slow for donations at the food bank. The most needed items are can tuna, green beans, canned corn, tomato sauce, and soups. The June 2021 stats were as follows ; 106 Households Daily and 119 Boxes. The average for June 2020 was; 124 Households and 175 boxes. The year-to-date total is 8521 households and 701 boxes.

3. District C-

Councilman Roberts-Absent

4. District D-

Councilwoman Ludwig stated the COVID numbers at the St. Tammany Parish Hospital have increased significantly. Melissa Hodgson, the Communications Director at St. Tammany Parish Hospital, reported that there are 16 patients in COVID care as of today, compared to 0 to 2 within the last couple of months. She encourages the public to get the vaccine, especially with the new Delta 19 variant which is supposed to be more contagious. St. Tammany Parish as a whole has increased

5. District E-

Councilman Verret acknowledged the passing of former Governor Edwin Edwards. Governor Edwards was the only person to serve four terms as Louisiana Governor. He left an indelible mark on the state. Councilman Verret stated that Governor Edwards cared and did what he could for the disadvantaged and the elderly. He will be missed.

6. Councilman At Large (Smith)-

Councilman at Large Smith congratulated everyone who was involved and participated in sparks in the park. A special recognition for the Covington concert band and kudos to the administration and everyone who worked hard on this event. He asked the mayor to address the following issues:

- (a) What has been done to notify residents that they are affected by a boil water advisory? He stated, he has received a lot of negative comments and feedbacks from residences located in the nose park area just off Jahncke Ave of the recent advisory. The residents claimed they were not informed .
- (b) He stated, he was under the impression that the Boston St overlay project was getting started. He asked if it had gotten started?

Erin Bivona, CAO stated that they had to accept the second lowest bid and was in the process of contracting with them. The proceed date should be towards the end of the month. She also stated the businesses on Boston street will be notified of the delay.

7. Councilman At Large (President)-

Council President Rolling thanked Aimee Faucheux, Amy Tucker and Bridget Hatty for a successful Sparks In the Park. He stated just a note, the hot dog eating contest winner ate 15 hot dogs. He stated the Kokomo stroll had a great

attendance and thanked Administration, Public Works and the CBA (Covington Business Association) who does so much for our community. Carnival in Covington is moving straight ahead for March 1, 2022 Mardi Gras Day. If you want any information, please visit www.carnivalincovington.com

Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Johnson

- (a) He stated that the Sparks in the Park was a wonderful event. A big thank you to Amy Faucheux, Amy Tucker, Bridget Hatty, Chris Davis, Chief Mike Ferrell, Chief Gary Blocker and their department's for helping make it a success.
- (b) He stated he is also grateful to the Covington Business Association and their volunteers with their help with the hot dog eating contests and the watermelon eating contest.
- (c) He stated he would like to thank the face painting volunteers from SSA (Saints Scholastic Academy). They are starting to participate in more and more events throughout the year in the city. They came in and set up everything for the face painting and it was nice having six face painters instead of two. Much appreciated to them.
- (d) He stated he would like to thank the music provided by the talented musicians for free, to our city and the community by, "The Dishonorable Johnsons" and the "North Shore Traditional Music Association". A special shout out to the Covington Concert Band and their Executive Director Meredith Berry and Music Director, Dr. Erik Morales. The whole city should be looking for their next performances later this fall.
- (e) He thanked Councilman Joey Roberts for his service as the DJ and the master of ceremonies for the eating contest.
- (f) He stated what a wonderful event this past Saturday evening on Columbia St was with the Kokomo stroll and a very grateful thank you to the Covington Business Association for their help. These cultural events are one of the reasons our city is one of the coolest cities in America.

Councilman Botsford stated that a recognition of Jerome Ratty , Park ranger at Bogue Falaya Park is an unsung hero and he had the park looking great for the Sparks in the Park. Mayor Mark stated, "Yes, Jerome does a wonderful job."

- (g) He stated tomorrow there will be a blood drive at Bogue Falaya Hall. We are asking that anyone who is inclined to give , please do so in the name of Mike Cronin. Mr. Cronin is the husband of former Covington High principle, Betty Cronin. Please come out if you can between the hours of 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.
- (h) He stated that Coffee With the Mayor will be on Thursday morning between 9:00 AM and 10:00 AM.
- (i) He stated Friday evening is Sunset at the Landing.
- (j) He stated this Saturday is the C4 Explosion Comic Collectable show from 10am to 4pm at the Firehouse Event Center located at 423 N. Theard Street.
- (k) He stated that the final Friday of the month is the Columbia Street Block Party. A special thanks to the Covington businesses association for helping organize that event.

(1) He addressed the question Councilman Smith asked earlier and stated the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals has specific guidelines that Public Works follows. The total of homes that are affected by the boil water advisory tells Public Works how to notify these homeowners.

Councilwoman Ludwig asked if the Police App, Nixel would be good for notifications for the boil water advisory?

Mayor Johnson stated yes that was suggested .

Councilman Smith suggested signs be placed on corners in the neighborhood that is affected. We can then reuse the signs for future advisories.

Mayor Mark stated he will follow up on that suggestion.

3. Erin Bivona, Chief Administrative Officer-

Mrs. Bivona gave an update on the hack that occurred on March 11, 2021 on the City of Covington Computer Systems. She stated she was going to try to quantify where we are in recovery from the hack.. The first two weeks we were in recovery mode which was the first wave of response. The Louisiana Cyber Investigators who came in on that first day and started the criminal investigation. The next day the National Guard came in and we worked with them for two weeks just to recover and have basic operations up and running. Since that point, IT has been focused on restoring our day-to-day operations and securing our network. We have brought in an outside consultant to help focus 100% on the hack recovery. So, they are helping us not just to bring back those normal functions but, looking at the security side of it also. The first responder's ability was never impaired. There were communication issues but, 911 was never down. There were a few communications and ad mend function issues. For example, just this week the Police Department now has laptops working in their patrol vehicles. As of right now we have two outstanding issues. One is Wi-Fi in our cities facilities because Wi-Fi has a lot of security concerns associated with it. We had to rebuild our network. The second issue is Munis. Munis is the city's finance operating system. All our payroll, utility billing and anything having to do with city dollars is associated with Munis. Since the hack, we have been under Munis Disaster Response Recovery Mode, and we will be there until the end of September. This has affected some of our major functions and bringing new functions and updates online. It has affected the city's ability to close out the 2020 year which allows us to do rollovers. We can then move into the audit and then once that is done, we can start the 2022 budget in Munis. We contacted the Louisiana Legislative Auditor to notify them that we had been hacked. We had submitted to them a request for an extension and our auditor is very confident that we will get that extension . As for the 2022 budget, even though we cannot enter it into Munis, Mayor Mark as instructed staff to go ahead and start preparing the departments projects, putting them all on paper. We are going to stick to the normal schedule that we have, so that we don't lose momentum. This will allow us to have our budget hearings and move through the adoption process as usual. The two new servers that were given to us by the National Guard are fully activated. The level of protection we have moving forward is significantly better than before the hack. IT has identified a number of ongoing projects to continue to improve security. Quenton, who is the IT director, is preparing to conduct an internal full security audit of all city computer systems. It will not affect the day-to-day operations. It's intended to protect us moving forward. He hopes to make this an annual process. Prior to the hack, we did not have off site backups on all of our city servers. We now have off

site, on site, and offline backups. We are starting to back up physically and put it on a shelf and we will be doing that weekly.

Councilman Botsford asked was there any people with direct deposit affected?

Mrs. Bivona stated that no there was no indication that any customer or resident was affected.

Councilman Botsford asked if we know how the hackers got into our system.

Mayor Johnson stated that there was a hole in Microsoft's email server platform that was infected.

Councilman Botsford asked if there was a cost associated with the hack?

Mrs. Bivona yes, we have incurred some cost and tabulated those . Fortunately, we had a cyber security insurance policy in place, and we have submitted every single cost and we're waiting to find out if that's going to be approved.

Councilman Rolling asked what the timeline is on the insurance approval?

Mrs. Bivona stated her assistant Anne Fatzer is handling the insurance claim and it looks like they're going to cover most or all of the expenses.

Councilman Rolling asked what type of cost are we looking at?

Mrs. Bivona stated that we have exceeded \$100,000.00.

Councilman Rolling asked if Quenton the IT director has put any kind of training in place for the employees to watch out for concerning emails etc.

Mrs. Bivona stated that Quenton and the consultant that was hired, are putting a program and a training together to address that concern.

Councilman Lewis asked when Wi Fi was going to be available in the Council Chamber.

Mrs. Bivona stated she will have to get with Quenton for that answer.

Councilman President Rolling reminded everyone that the August Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 3, 2021 at 6pm.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:37pm.

/s/_____
LARRY ROLLING
Council President

/s/_____
JOANN RUCKER
Council Clerk