

CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 15, 2021, 6:00PM

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

Roll call was as follows:

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

ABSENT: NONE

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

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by **Karen Johnson**.

Council President Rolling thanked everyone for coming to the special meeting. He went over some ground rules and procedures. He stated he would like everyone to act professional and respectful tonight in this process and remember, we do have an obligation to the citizens of Covington and our constituents to do what we call checks and balances. Our Home Rule Charter for the City of Covington states that. President Rolling explained what a confirmation hearing is saying, "It is to decide whether an official job to be given to someone who has been suggested for the position". He stated that the last few days he has been searching to make sure our city is in good hands and to make sure our Council makes a good decision for the future of our city. President Rolling quoted, from Proverbs 15-1 stating, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Lastly, there is what leadership truly is. It is the challenge to be strong not rude, be kind but not weak, be bold but not a bully, be humble but not timid and be proud but not arrogant. So tonight, that is what he wants to see from the City Council, Administration and public and welcomes people's questions and answers that we can move forward on.

Confirmation of Mayoral Appointment of Michael Ferrell as Police Chief

1. Introduction of Mr. Michael Ferrell (Mayor)

Mayor Johnson stated Mike Ferrell is a twenty-eight year veteran of law enforcement. With a history of promotions leading progressively to positions of more responsibility. In 2011, he was chosen to attend the FBI National Academy to represent the St. Tammany Parish Sheriffs Department. He has extensive training in many areas of law enforcement including but not limited to investigations, narcotics, tactical, hostage rescue, firearms and SWAT management. His extensive instructor certifications include; police sniper, taser, explosive handler, Clandestine Site Safety Officer, Glock and Colt M4 Armor, He has an uninterrupted work history in the field of law enforcement for twenty-eight years. In 2017, he was chosen to represent the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's office in the leadership St. Tammany program. He stated this is where he came to know Mike Ferrell as a policeman's policeman as a hard working

dedicated professional with leadership qualities. His professional experience started in 1993-1998 at the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office as a patrol deputy. From 2000-2015 he was with the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office as a Swat Commander. In 1998 to 2016, he was St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office Lieutenant, Criminal Patrol, Street Crimes and training instructor. From 2016-2019 he was with the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office Captain of the criminal patrol division overseeing District number 3. The St. Tammany Parish District number 3 criminal patrol division includes our city, the City of Covington. His compensations include, the Medal of Valor, St. Tammany Parish Office 2004, the Metal of Merit St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office 2000, the Metal of Merit St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office 1999, the Medal of Merit and Jefferson Parish Sheriff's office 1996. Mike Ferrell comes to us this evening highly recommended. With all of this in mind and per the City Charter, I hereby appointed Mike Ferrell as the City of Covington's new Police Chief and respectfully request that the Council confirm this selection.

Mr. Mike Ferrell, candidate for Covington Police Chief gave an introduction of himself to the Council and answered brief questions and verifications from the Council.

Councilman President Rolling asked for Public Comments .

Mr. Gerald Sticker, City of Mandeville Police Chief addressed his support for Mr. Ferrell.

Mr. Gus Davis stated gave a brief comment.

Ms. Kim Winston Bigler , the founder of James Samaritan non-profit. Ms. Bigler addressed her support for Mr. Ferrell.

Mr. Rick Richard, former City of Mandeville Chief of Police addressed his support for Mr. Ferrell.

Mr. Cedric Wright member of the NAACP asked for a little more open communication and gave his concern to the Mayor and the Council to choose a police chief to serve all of Covington.

Mr. Pat Mashburn who is a Treatment Coordinator for Children and Families in Crisis. He addressed his support for Mr. Ferrell.

Mr. Lance Bonham, a resident in the City of Covington expressed his concern and gave a brief comment on the communication between the Mayor and the Council.

Ms. Jan Butler, a resident in the City of Covington gave a brief comment.

Mr. Colin Sims, Assistant District Attorney for Mr. Montgomery addressed his support for Mr. Ferrell.

COMMENTS:

Council District :

1. District A-

Councilman Lewis stated he is saddened the way the process happened. He stated to Mr. Ferrell if he is appointed , he has a hard task ahead of him. District A is more than the negativity that is directed to it. We were a thriving community. Having a strong police force will help us move back in that direction. He stated the first thing we see is a barrier with the police officers that

start with the dark tinted windows in the patrol cars. The officers need to become part of the community. We have to change our thinking for the entire City of Covington when it comes to the police department. He stated he needs to be assured that when he asked for something in his district that needs to be addressed, the officers will go to the situation and address it and find a solution to the problem. Councilman Lewis compared his growing up in the community with police officers who coached them and spoke to them in the community on a friendly basis. Covington is missing that today. Mr. Ferrell if you are confirmed, he stated that he will see his face and hear his concerns and he will bring his community. It is the Council's time to act and help and get results for the entire City of Covington.

2. District B-

Councilman Botsford thanked everyone for coming out and thanked the appearers. He stated Covington is in this position due the actions of a certain police officer and that is not who Covington is. His recent conversations with some of the Covington Police Officers stating they have a black cloud over the. He told Mr. Ferrell if he is confirmed , he will have to remove that cloud. He did his research among police departments, fire departments district attorney's office and the sheriff's office and not one had a bad thing to say about Mr. Ferrell. He was praised by all. He stated the council have spent hours over this and we are here to represent Covington and are here to make the best choice.

3. District C-

Councilman Roberts stated to Mr. Ferrell that he had apologized twice tonight. Councilman Roberts stated he wanted to make sure he apologized to Mr. Ferrell as well for something that he was trying to defend himself for something that could have been handled from the front end. Trust and transparency is probably the biggest aspect that anyone can have in anything that we do. He stated he had no idea the City was looking for a police chief. He is very disappointed in this communication process. This process of appointment is broken. He stated it need He stated to Mr. Ferrell that if he is approved tonight to please work with the Council as we move forward.

4. District D-

Councilwoman Ludwig stated the process is not everyone's favorite. Just as Councilman Botsford stated, the homework done by the Council to different multiple agencies brought all positive responses for Mr. Ferrell. Police Chief is not just administrative. It's leadership and skills and a firm but respectful hand necessary in that roll.

5. District E-

Councilman Verret stated a police department should be as good as the citizens that it serves and protects. This City Council has been faced with repeated requests in regard to adequate funding and providing the necessary resources for the police department to do its job. In a responsible and fair manner, this council has repeatedly met this challenge head on. It has in fact lived up to its part of the bargain. The council has provided the appropriate resources and I think everyone would agree with that. Every time this council has been asked, we have answered the call. So where are we now? Mr. Ferrell you will agree that when I interviewed you twice, the same comments that were made by each of these council members were echoed by me in private. The police department has not lived up to its potential. There are issues in the city. The city continues to face challenges on a number of different fronts and this council, and its residents can attest to the continued gun violence in the community , and although some have characterized

it as a perception problem, it's a lack of enforcement problem. The police department is in need of leadership. He stated to Mr. Ferrell that he was going to support him with the clear understanding that this council expects results.

6. At Large (Smith)-

Councilman at Large Smith stated it's been hectic. Everyone on the Council was elected to serve this city. He is mostly disappointed in the way the Mayor handled this appointment. Councilman Smith read from the Home Rule Charter the procedure of electing a police chief. It's the process that he is disappointed in. He stated he believes the police chiefs job is to delegate, lead and 60-70% administration. He stated there needed to be better communication. He stated he is embarrassed for the city. He is embarrassed for Mr. Ferrell and the people we represent.

7. At Large (President)-

Council President Rolling thanked everyone for their participation tonight. He stated that this appointment is solely at the Mayor's discretion to pick a candidate. We all can agree that tonight that there was some mis opportunities that were taken in the steps that were taken to acknowledge to this confirmation process and I think they were all acknowledged. That being said by the administration and Mr. Ferrell about your resume, you did clear the record. Our responsibility is to do our job as Council Members and also our constituents and our great city also. Its safe to say all has been said tonight. His stated his hope for tonight is that we can move forward approved or not approve and also to have a positive image for our city's future.

President Rolling called for a motion and asked Council clerk , JoAnn Rucker to call the roll for the Confirmation.

Motion to confirm Mr. Ferrell as Police Chief for the City of Covington.

(Botsford) **Second**(Roberts)

Roll Call was Unanimous. **Mr. Mike Ferrell was appointed City of Covington Police Chief.**

Mr. Ferrell stated he wanted to thank everyone for their vote of confidence in him. He stated he promised he won't let them down. He stated he is here to work with them.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:34pm

LARRY ROLLING
Council President

JOANN RUCKER
Council Clerk