

CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

October 5, 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, Joey Roberts, Cody Ludwig and Larry Rolling.

ABSENT: None

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 Mayor Johnson.

APPEARERS

- 1. Councilman Verret** introduced **Ms. Owen Smith**, Dean of Campus Administration at Northshore Community College in Lacombe. She explained they had offered some disaster recovery non-credit classes after Hurricane Ida including basic electrical, drywall, and flooring so individuals could help themselves recover after disaster. They were held at the Hammond Campus. She discussed the many things Northshore Community College offers. Reminder everyone they could come tour the campus anytime.
- 2. Councilman Roberts** introduced Mrs. Diane Weiss, former Interim Councilwoman at Large. She gave a brief history of the “4 on the 4th” Race and a recap of the 2021 “4 on the 4th” Race. She presented checks from the proceeds of the race to the Covington Firefighters Association, Covington Police Department and the YMCA. Council President Rolling thanked Mrs. Weiss for everything that she does for the community.
- 3. Councilman Verret** introduced **Mrs. Felicia Boudreaux**- Old Covington Homeowners Association discussed an incident that happened in front of her home on Jahnke Avenue concerning a resident yelling at the debris pickup workers. She spoke of her concerns and stated everyone needs to be neighborly and work together in this time of recovery.
- 4. Council President Rolling** introduced House Representative Mr. Mark Wright. Representative Wright stated he reached out to President Rolling after the last Council Meeting concerning the group against the Casino where a heavily edited video was presented. He stated he was there to set the record straight about the Legislatures roll in what they did and did not do about that process. He said it was really important for him to explain the truth and thanked the Council. President Rolling and Councilman Botsford thanked Representative Wright.
- 1. Council President Rolling** introduced **Mr. David Rittvo**, on behalf of P2E (Peninsula Pacific Entertainment, the Owner/Developer/Operator of the

proposed Camellia Bay Resort Casino Marina Project). Mr. Rittvo presented a PowerPoint and a Video for the proposed Camelia Bay Resort Casino in Slidell , Louisiana. The Council had questions and a brief discussion with Mr. Rittvo on the questions of effects it would have on small businesses and many other factors affecting the Parish.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilman Botsford. Roll Call: Yeas-7 Nays-0 Absent-0 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. 2021-08-01-(Amended) PUBLIC HEARING ACTION ON NO. 2021-08-01- An Ordinance of the City of Covington Declaring the Unconstructed Portion of Presidents Drive (60-Foot Row), Extending from Menetre Drive to Mile Branch, Abandoned, Vacated, Closed and Not Needed for Public Purposes. (Planning Case No. 21-07-02SAC-Street Revocation) (Roberts)

Councilman Verret 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 Smith made a motion to adopt Item No. 2021-08-01 **seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll Call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2021-08-01. Item No. 2020-08-01 was adopted.**

NEW BUSINESS

A. Items removed from the consent calendar: None.

B. Items to be voted on:

1. RESOLUTION NUMBER 2021-16 -A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Re-Appointment of William Courtney to the City of Covington Municipal Fire and Police Civil Service Board for a Term of Three (3) Years. (Smith)

There were no public comments on Resolution 2021-16.

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt **Resolution No. 2021-16**, seconded by **Councilman Lewis**. **Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2021-16. Resolution No. 2021-16 was adopted.**

2. RESOLUTION NUMBER 2021-17- A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Re-Appointment of Ella D. Selmon to the City of Covington Municipal Fire and Police Civil Service Board for a Term of Three (3) Years. (Smith)

Councilman Smith stated that we appreciate everything she does in the community, and she does a terrific job.

There were no public comments on Resolution 2021-17.

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2021-17. seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2021-17. Resolution No. 2021-17 was adopted.

C. Items for discussion: None.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Council District and Committee Reports:

1. District A-

Councilman Lewis thanked the Council and Administration and the Volunteers doing this time and stated we have a long way to go and still have a lot of people in need with trees to be removed and homes to be repaired. When Hurricane Ida hit, there was a lot done to the City of Covington. Not having resources here created a lot of confusion for our residents. Lack of planning within our community and within our homes created a lot of confusion. With that said, we move forward. We got through this one person at a time starting with myself. We teamed up with Senator Patrick McMath, the VFW, Project Blessing, Convoy of Hope, Councilman Botsford and Council President Rolling. Like what was said earlier, we need to help our neighbors.

2. District B-

Councilman Botsford stated he would like to thank Councilman Lewis. They teamed up during the storm to bring supplies to the community. He thanked Public Works for the work they did after the storm. He thanked the Fire Department and the Police Department stating they knocked it out of the park. It was people helping people like St. Paul's Athletic Team helping. The Food Bank gave pallets and pallets of food and eighteen wheelers full of disaster relief supplies all over the Parish. The Food Bank is fully operational. They are having a Resource Bank Coin Drive. Turn in your coins to Resource Bank to make a donation to the Food Bank from October 4-October 15. There is also, Pallets with a Purpose. This is their annual event which is on November 12. The most needed items are Mac-n-Cheese, canned fruit, canned vegetables, canned beans and cereal. He thanked Administration for their hard work during this time.

3. District C-

Councilman Roberts thanked everyone associated with the city and just stepping forward. When a storm hits an entire city, how do you know who to help first? It's hard. When it comes to District C we fared okay. We had a lot of people out there helping. People were neighborly and things worked out. I think we did a great job in this situation, and we learned a lot of what we can do for the next situation. It's only going to keep getting better as we go. Hurricane Ida has prepared us for what's going to come next because, we're in Louisiana and it's going to happen again. In District C, Patricia Drive is back on the ball, and I see the work going on thank you to Administration. He stated that this storm has opened his eyes up to some spots in District C that need to be addressed as far as lift stations and drainage which we're all working on right now. Kudos to everyone I'm glad we talked about it and let's learn from it and get better as we go.

4. District D-

Councilwoman Ludwig stated she did agree everyone was incredibly neighborly. The West 20s did a cooking event for the West 30s where everyone came together. SSA was a huge help with that event and also children from St. Peters. The St

Tammany Parish Library is back to in person events as of October 1st. She stated she spoke with Melissa Hodgson from the St. Tammany Parish Hospital, and she said that the main campus did not skip a beat some of their smaller campuses around had some damage but they kind of just diverted their offices and everything to other areas. She stated COVID hospitalizations are down due to an increase in the vaccine rates, but she also wants to encourage people to continue to get their vaccine. They expect the flu season to be intense. She thanked Public Works , Fire Department and Police Department for their hard work. Administration communication was excellent. We still obviously have a long way to go in certain areas but, for the most part we're definitely getting there considering it's only been a month. Recycling returns on Thursday. As for October events, Chilling At The River is Thursday at 5:30 Sunset at the Landing is October 15th, The Art Market with the Saint Tammany Art Association is back at the trailhead, Keep Covington Beautiful is also doing their river sweep that day so look on our city's website for information on how to get involved. We will be doing a beer pairing dinner with Seiler Bar and the owners of Gnarly Barley in which proceeds benefits the Covington boys and Girls Club. Over the last several years we've been putting an Oktoberfest and last year we donated 22,000 which was our biggest year ever so I'm hoping obviously it's much smaller scale but it's for the Boys and Girls Club of Covington and we're excited to get to do something despite COVID. Also. the last block party of the year is Friday, October 29 and Saturday , October 30, is Trickin and Treatin at the trailhead for the kids.

5. District E-

Councilman Verret stated that he wanted to echo some of the council comments. I don't think I could overstate some of the level of destruction especially in Old Landing. They were the last to get their electricity restored along with internet and now there's a feeling that they are last to get the debris pickup. He thanked a representative of the debris contractor for being at the meeting. The Council will have to meet and assess what we did right and what we did wrong and what we can do better. He recognized Public Works, Police Department and the Fire department stating, "You knocked it out of the park". Chris Brown waved building permit fees till October 26th, and I would urge all of our residents, if you think you may need a permit go ahead and get it now. There will be time to discuss the good bad and the ugly later but right now let's just get the job done.

6. Councilman At Large (Smith)-

Councilman at Large Smith stated it's good to see everybody and that we need to give thanks because, this storm hit us hard. We are grateful that nobody loss at life. Kudos to all the essential personnel including the Mayor and his Administration, Chris Davis, Public Works, Police Chief Ferrell and Fire Chief Blocker. You guys were awesome. I took a ride out to Hwy 1081 to one of the dump sites. It was amazing, the piles of debris. Let's hope it never happens again. We live in Louisiana but, chances are we going to get nailed again. Let's learn from it and again just thanks everybody for doing your jobs .

7. Councilman At Large (President)-

Council President Rolling I appreciate talking about the volunteers and the non-profits they did a great job. Project Blessing was there the whole way given out a lot of things to the public, so we appreciate them. The administration and the council including everyone on this panel, worked hard in their districts and also throughout the whole community. We have a strong leadership with our Council, and we appreciate you very much. He acknowledged Administration for getting the debris contractors staged before the storm was over. Cleco was able to come into

Covington first because, the streets were starting to be cleared before a lot of the other municipalities. So, thank you for that vision ahead. He stated, the department heads did a wonderful job. The best is yet to come for the city. We are going to recover from this. He stated he had the honor to attend the Covington Chapter Kiwanis to speak. The YMCA , a great organization was there also. The Kiwanis Club is a caring organization, and they give a lot back to this community so, support them in any way you can. All there their monies raised go right back into the community. They are very hard workers and very good people.

Councilman Smith stated that him and Police Chief Ferrell will be doing “Men Who Cook” in efforts to raise money for the “Hope House” fighting a war against child abuse. It's Sunday, November 7th. The Gala will be located on the top level (rooftop) of the Justice Center's parking garage. Information for the event is www.cachopehouse.org. It’s one of the best things that takes place in this city for the right cause.

Councilman Botsford reminded everybody that Halloween is on Sunday. On Saturday, November 6th is Porch Fest. There will be five bands for this event including, Chris Rivers and the 3 Rivers Cooperative, Ben Redwine, Pontchartrain Shakers, Poisson Rouge and Delta Funk. The proceeds and everything that we raise over the amount that it costs us just to pay the bands, will go to the hope house.

Councilman Rolling stated the Council On Aging St. Tammany, is having a tailgate party for the seniors at the Castine Center it's October 6, 9:30am to 1:00 PM .

1. **Mayor Johnson** thanked Council President Rolling and members of the Council. He wanted to reiterate one of the comments regards to disaster relief assistance. A few days after we get over the initial shock of a storm, we start realizing individuals that have individual needs. It’s the role of local government foremost, to address public safety. We do that by immediately going in and clearing the roads, making sure Cleco can come in and restore power and making sure that our sewer lift stations are working, our sewer systems are working, and our water wells are working. Making sure our fire trucks and our ambulances can safely get to their destinations and that our police have freedom to patrol our city and protect it. It’s such an important part of storm recovery. Delivering personal relief to individuals is not our role. You can't be all things to all people. You have to recognize what your role is . A huge thank you to the churches, school teams, the Kiwanis Club, The Rotary, the service organizations and to the council folks that deliver that assistance. On a Federal Government level, it, is the role of FEMA. A new position was introduced this year. Courtney Graves with the Covington Police Department has been put in charge of gathering who the resources are. She gathers where the resources are located, then Council people or individuals can contact her with the need of assistance. The city itself is not going to deliver that relief but, there's no reason we can't be the nexus that facilitates who's got the resource and who needs the resource. He stated he would like to thank the Council for its patients

on this. He suggested to have a committee meeting later on to discuss everything concerning the storm, Cherokee lane was the last one to get electricity and the last one to get Internet. The residents were told they will always be the last ones. They are at the very end of the line and there's only seven homes. Cleco goes by customer count at some point. I think over the last month we've heard enough from me. I've said quite a bit in the E blast and on social media in an attempt to get our cities message out. Tonight, I thought with your permission I would have each of the department heads come up and share a little bit about their takeaway or their experience or whatever they wanted to say.

Chief Blocker stated out of his 24 years serving the City of Covington and being through different disasters from hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods this has been the smoothest running. He stated that a lot was the pre-planning and having these push crews mobilized and staged prior to the storm. This saved our essential personnel and for us to refocus and get the cities services back up and running. For six days straight we had over 18 calls a day in between cutting trees and other services. Day one we received 28 calls. We as a city really did amazing job working with the Police Department, Administration and Public Works. We all came together. We met every day and became a great team.

Chief Ferrell stated, "We were a well-oiled machine with everybody working well together". Out of all my years of policing, this is probably one of the smoothest recoveries. We were so prepared and that made a difference. He thanked the Council for use of the chambers for his officers. He stated from the PD aspect, there were no reports of looting during the course of the storm or any kind of major crime incidents. I think that was because we were able to double our manpower. He thanked for the opportunity to serve the city. I think we're making a difference. Since June, the PD conducted 612 traffic stops. There was only 308 tickets issued. There has been a noticeable difference as far as the speeding and traffic accidents go. A total of 120 arrest have been made and seven guns have been taken off the street. Kudos to the men and women of the department for working hard and doing their part.

Chris Davis, Director of Public Works stated preplanning means everything. When this storm hit, Public Works was able to get on the streets and start to open them along with the Fire Department and the Police Department. That allows Ceres to be able to bring their trucks in and start working. This allowed Cleco to be able to come directly in to open roads. There is always stuff that you're going to learn from each one of these storms. We prioritize the Old Landing area. Everybody worked together. When you're tired and you need a break and a fireman jumps up on a piece of equipment and starts working, that's an awesome team and I'm very proud to be a part of it.

2. **Erin Bivona, Chief Administrative Officer** thanked the Council for giving her a chance to give an overview of how the City of Covington prepares for these storms and how we react from the Administrative level. Before storm season even hits, Administration starts working on the hurricane plan. The draft for this year's plan started in the spring. Mrs. Bivona gave a step by step, minute by minute, day by day, detailed report of the recovery process for the City of Covington from Hurricane Ida.

A few of the Council members asked brief questions to Mrs. Bivona and Mayor Mark and they were discussed.

Councilman President Rolling reminded everyone that the November Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 2, 2021 at 6pm. Also, the 2022 Budget Session will be held on Tuesday, November 16 at 5:00pm in the Chamber and Wednesday, November 17, at 5:00pm if it has to be continued . The December Council Meeting will be held the second Tuesday on December 14, at 5:00pm.

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

/s/ _____
LARRY ROLLING
Council President

/s/ _____
JOANN RUCKER
Council Clerk