

CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

February 01, 2022

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

Roll call was as follows:

PRESENT: Councilman Peter Lewis Sr., Councilman John Botsford, Councilman Joey Roberts, Councilwoman Cody Ludwig, Councilman Mark W. Verret, Councilman-At -Large, Vice President Rick Smith, and Councilman At Large, President 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. Councilman Rolling asked to remember Mr. Meredith Barry, “The Founder of the Covington Concert Band”, family in your prayers. Mr. Barry passed on January 28, 2022.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Rod Rodrigue, City Attorney.

APPEARERS

- 1. Councilman Verret stated** that the discussion on the Agenda is about the Roundabout at Jefferson Avenue and 21st Ave.

Mayor Johnson gave a brief comment and introduced Ms. Allison Schilling who is the former director of District 62 with DOTD and was hired by Mayor Johnson as a liaison between the City of Covington and DOTD. Ms. Schilling is retired from DOTD.

Councilman Verret stated that he as well as Councilman Smith have made several calls to DOTD, and he has not had a response until right before this meeting tonight. What he is wanting to get to tonight is a status of where we are on this project and how the city feels about the project as it is written.

Ms. Schilling gave a detailed report on the roundabout at Jefferson Ave and 21st. She noted that the final plans are 98% complete. The project will begin construction in the Spring or Summer of this year. The initial work will begin 60 to 90 days after the contracts are executed. The work will take about 9 to 12 months to complete. There will be no lane closures during the daytime, only at night 8pm to 6pm.

There was a lengthy discussion between the Council and Ms. Schilling with many questions.

Ms. Callie Baker, City Engineer also gave a brief statement and answered questions from the Council.

- 2. Mr. Adam Aquistapace stated** his concerns on the roundabout. He has met with DOTD. He stated if we are going to make a permanent change in the City of Covington, whatever occurs needs to be in the best interest of everyone and it makes sense to the City of Covington.

Councilman Smith asked who he met with ?

Mr. Aquistapace stated he met with two traffic engineers, the project manager and the negotiator. They were very professional.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by **Councilman Smith**. Roll Call: Yeas-7 Nays-0 Absent-0 to adopt the consent calendar. The consent calendar was adopted.

REGULAR AGENDA

Unfinished Business

1. Items to be voted on : None
2. Items for Discussion: None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Items removed from the consent calendar: None.

B. Items to be voted on:

1. **RESOLUTION NO. 2022-01-A** Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming The Appointment of Trey Blackall as The Council District At Large Appointment To The Covington Planning and Zoning Commission to Fill an Unexpired Term (Smith)

Councilman Smith stated that he is withdrawing this resolution. The Resolution No. 2022-01 was withdrawn.

C. Items for discussion: None.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

A. Council District and Committee Reports:

1. **District A** -

Councilman Lewis stated he wanted to thank everyone who was involved in the recent MLK program. He thanked the Covington Police Department and all the council that participated. He stated that they presented Mrs. Aimee Faucheux and Mrs. Nahketah Bagby with a plaque for their service.

2. **District B** -

Councilman Botsford stated the update for the foodbank. They are at a daily rate of 114 boxes distributed. He stated January and February is a slow month for the Food Bank. He stated if anyone would like to have a food drive, please contact Ginger Kunkle at gkunkle@northshorefoodbank.org. The most needed items are tomato sauce, canned peas, and corn muffins. The next CBA meeting will be held at the Food Bank's resale shop. He encouraged people to join the CBA. It's a great organization for networking. The food Bank will be bringing back Yoga in the Warehouse , Thursday March 10, 2022. Class will start at 6:00pm. It's a complimentary class but, they would appreciate donations to the Food Bank. They are going to have their annual Food Bank Golf Tournament on May 10, 2022 at the Beau Chene Country Club. Individual and team sponsorship is available and corporate sponsorship is also available. For more information go to www.northshorefoodbank.org/golftournament Please remember to shop local and don't forget the Farmer's Market on Wednesdays at the Trailhead and Saturdays by the Police Station.

3. District C –

Councilman Roberts stated his condolences to the Meredith Berry family. He stated that Patricia Dr. was completed and thanked everyone for that. The 15th Street walkway is coming into play and looking good. .

4. District D –

Councilwoman Ludwig stated on the yoga subject, the Covington Public Library does online yoga for people who can't leave their house. As far as events , the Olympia Parade is coming up on February 19, 2022. On March 12, 2022 we will finally have our St. Patrick's Day Parade. It begins at the Tap Room and ends by Jewels Cigar Shop. It ends with a block party until around 5:00pm. Sweet Daddy's BBQ will be selling food and there will also be a beer truck from Budweiser.

5. District E –

Councilman Verret stated his condolences for the Berry family. He stated the Covington Heritage Foundation was started back during the Covington Bi-Centennial. The past meeting was a very productive meeting earlier today and there will be six events coming up. The first will be April 3, 2022 which will be a Farm to Table Dinner at the Trailhead. The Antiques and Uniques Festival will be in conjunction with the CHF again on April 23&24, 2022. There will be a Memorial Day for the Veterans at the Bogue Falaya Hall and he thanked the City of Covington for continuing to have that. On July 16, 2022 they will be having Characters of Covington. The night before Halloween , we will be having , "Whisperings" which is a cemetery event. The History and Hollies tour will be in December, 2022. They are in process of updating the website. He challenged the members of the Council to join the Covington Heritage Foundation. He also encouraged all to join.

6. Councilman At Large (Vice President)

Councilman Smith stated his condolences also for the Meredith Berry family and his legacy will live on in the Covington Concert Band. He wanted to thank the St. Johns Fools of Misrules for another successful season for kicking off the Mardi Gras Season.

7. Councilman At Large (Vice President)

Council President Rolling stated the Martin Luther King Parade was a great event. He congratulated Councilman Lewis on doing a great job with the MLK day, the MLK program and events. He stated the executive committee and board for the Carnival in Covington Parade has been working very, very hard. The Lions Club will be starting the parade at 10:00am and the Carnival in Covington Parade will follow that parade. They are two separate parades. This parade will be the biggest and best Carnival Day that the City of Covington and the Northshore has ever experienced. We will have 17 or more traditional Mardi Gras floats. We have three high school marching bands, 12 marching groups and 2 horse groups. Our Grand Marshall is Hayley Arceneaux. Her family lives in Beau Chene. Hayley was the astronaut that went into space in September on the Inspiration X, the private spacecraft. We will have four Northshore medical heroes that we are going to honor. There will be one representing each hospital on the Northshore including, St. Tammany Hospital, Lakeview, Slidell and Ochsner. They will be our Honorary Grand Marshalls. This has really turned into a community event. The after event is called Tammany Gras. Soul Revival will be

playing. He invited everyone to come out. He stated all the Council received a draft copy of the contract for Geographic Demographic Consultants. We are not late on anything.

Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Mark Johnson

- a. He stated** it was last year August that the Council took the action of doing an increase pay for our police officers. He stated that we all felt the significant increase in pay was warranted. We had great support in the room that night and that the increase in pay sent a signal to law enforcements throughout St Tammany Parish and throughout the area that the City of Covington was serious about law enforcement. When other communities were talking about defunding the police, we were up funding the police. We did so and that's had some real benefits for our community. In addition to that, in July we appointed a new police chief, Mike Ferrell. He has really gotten the troops active and engaged. I know everyone is hungry for information, so I've asked Chief Ferrell to join us this evening and give the Council an update on what's happened in the past several months.

Chief Ferrell stated some things that are going on in the Police Department right now. We will be kicking off our DARE program this month. Our DARE officer just completed his certification training today up in North Mississippi. He will be hitting the ground running next week. We also completed the process of mapping out the crime camera's locations throughout the city. We were actually in the process of doing so in August then Hurricane Ida came and deleted the process . Ida also knocked out two of our test cameras. We put together the street crimes unit, just to kind of get a hold of things and it has really worked out. It's supervised by Sergeant Edwin Masters, who was also part of our profession stature, so it helps out to make sure the guys are doing the right thing. Not only hitting the streets looking at the criminal element but, hitting the streets and making contact with the with the good folks of the community. During the course of their pro-active patrol, he stated he receives text messages from the community thanking the police for being there. In the course of the last six months, We have actually recovered 20 firearms from the street including the last one of those last night. These firearms were from either convicted felons or persons in the possession of our narcotics. This is a felony charge right away. I give my hats off to the guys and out there beating the streets doing that. We are coming across some pretty dangerous folks, and I am happy to say that do their patrols and hit the streets and the elements are moving out. With the last several shootings we had in in the area, we made arrest on them all. The folks don't want it there so they're telling us who's causing the problem and that is really helping out. The number one complaint that we have in this city is the traffic issues. Speeding is an issue. In the last six months, we have made over 1400 traffic stops and wrote over 700 citations. He stated he has created a professional standards division that includes a Sergeant and Lieutenant assigned to the administration division. Their job is to monitor the body Cam footage from officers throughout the day so every day they are

reviewing the body Cam footage from the day before. We have so many young officers. They are critiquing these officers and making sure they're doing the right thing and not out there being hardcore. We are educating the public more than anything. So that the division on its own is helping us on the force making sure that these officers are staying professional and represent the city. The crime report just recently came out we have a 31% decline decrease in crime across the board for the city. My hats off to the folks of the Covington Police Department working hard. We ordered six new police cars in April we have four in our possession. We are still waiting for two more. The problem is the microchip. I thank everybody coming together and you guys are really doing a good job. Our new look for the new year is the dark blue uniforms. They are much easier to keep clean.

Councilman Rolling asked if there was still the bicycle patrol. **Chief Ferrell stated** the bikes are in the shop and hopefully be ready for Mardi Gras.

Councilman Smith stated this was some of the best news in this meeting tonight and how thankful he is that Chief Ferrell is our Police Chief.

Councilman Verret stated it was hard to hear about the 20 guns but was thankful the Police Department got them. He thanked Chief Ferrell for being there tonight. He stated we are doing a lot of things right in the city and it is important that we communicate what we do well.

Councilman Botsford stated he really appreciates the updates that have been sent . He asked how the reserve program was going that was kicked off.

Chief Ferrell stated that they currently have ten applicants and will start the interviewing process within the month.

Councilwoman Ludwig also reiterated what everyone else had said and complemented the officers for being very professional.

Mayor Johnson stated he wanted to follow up on what Councilwoman Ludwig had said. If your speeding , if your tail lights out or run a stop sign you will get pulled over. The residents need to understand that now because that was not always the case. Chief Ferrell uses a term that he has heard him say many times. He wants our officers to educate our drivers. We are fully staff and now we have a waiting list to join our department.

2. Erin Bivona, Chief Administrative Officer/Director of Administration-None

- **Council President Rolling reminded everyone of the March 2022 City of Covington Council Meeting which will be held on Tuesday, March 8th, 2022 at 6pm in the Council Chambers.**
- **He wished everyone a safe and Happy Mardi Gras .**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:07 PM.

Video of this meeting can be found on www.covla.com.

/s/ _____
LARRY ROLLING
Council President

/s/ _____
JOANN RUCKER
Council Clerk