

CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 13, 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 .

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mrs. Erin Bivona.

APPEARERS:

1. **Councilman Lewis** introduced Ms. Marie Wade who is treasurer of the St. Tammany Parish DEPEC. Ms. Wade spoke of the upcoming GALA on November 4, 2022 honoring Kathleen Blanco, Louisiana's first woman governor. The GALA will take place at Trinity Banquet Hall in Slidell, La. Beginning at 7:00pm on November 4, 2022.

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

A. Items to be voted on:

1. **PUBLIC HEARING ACTION ON NO. 2022-08-01**— An Ordinance to Amend the 2022 Capital and Operating Budget (Smith)

Councilman Smith gave an overview of Item No. 2022-08-01.

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.

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt amended Item 2022-08-01 seconded by Councilman Verret.

Roll Call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2022-08-01.

Item No. 2022-08-01 was adopted.

2. PUBLIC HEARING ACTION ON NO. 2022-08-02- An Ordinance of the City of Covington Revoking the 7.5 Foot Servitude on the Rear Line of Lot 20B Old Landing Subdivision Section B in the City of Covington (Verret)

Councilman Verret gave an overview of Item No. 2022-08-02.

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.

Councilman Verret made a motion to adopt Item No. 2022-08-02 seconded by Councilman Smith. Roll Call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2022-08-02. Item No. 2022-08-02 was adopted.

3. Items for Discussion: None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Items removed from the consent calendar: None.

B. Items to be voted on:

1. RESOLUTION No. 2022-18 A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Re-Appointment of Alva Smith as the District B Appointment to the Covington Planning and Zoning Commission (Botsford)
Councilman Botsford gave an overview of Resolution No. 2022-18.
Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2022-18, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2022-18. Resolution No. 2022-18 was adopted.

2. RESOLUTION No. 2022-19 A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Re-Appointment of Bruce Davidson as the District D Appointment to the Covington Planning and Zoning Commission (Ludwig)
Councilwoman Ludwig gave an overview of Resolution No. 2022-19.
Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2022-19, seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2022-19. Resolution No. 2022-19 was adopted.

3. RESOLUTION No. 2022-20 A Resolution of the Covington City Council to Consider Waiving Land Use/ Permitting Requirements for the State of Louisiana Expedited Temporary Housing Assistance Program (Roberts)
Councilman Roberts gave an overview of Resolution No. 2022-20.
There was a brief discussion among the Council.
Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2022-20, seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2022-20. Resolution No. 2022-19 was adopted.

4. RESOLUTION No. 2022-21 A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Appointment of Meg Williams as the District B Appointment to the Covington Board of Adjustments (Botsford) **Councilman Botsford** gave an overview of Resolution No. 2022-21 and introduced Mrs. Meg Williams. **Mrs. Williams** made a brief comment. **Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2022-21, seconded by Councilman Roberts. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2022-21. Resolution No. 2022-21 was adopted.**

B. Items for Discussion:

- 1. Mr. Mark Richards**, a board member of Keep Covington Beautiful and a retired teacher at St. Paul High School introduced four students from the Key Club of St. Paul High School including Davis Pelshay, Johnny Palmer, Jack Keller, and Connor Dotson. The Students gave a Power Point presentation of the work they have been doing helping maintain the Litter Boom on Mile Branch. The Council thanked the students for their hard work they have been doing and appreciation.
- 2. Councilman Botsford** stated that we are here to listen to our constituents who used the trace and to listen to your opinions to help us get with the parish and state so that we can come together collectively and come up with the possibilities during the construction of the bridge. Safety is the most important thing. **Councilman Botsford introduced Mr. Patrick Brooks owner of Brooks bike shop. Mr. Brooks expressed** his concerns of the trace closing due to the construction of the new bridge over the Bogue Falaya River. Several residents voiced their concerns. There was a in depth discussion from the Council on their concerns and ideas .

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

A. Council District and Committee Reports:

1. District A –

Councilman Lewis stated the VFW 2nd annual Indoor/Outdoor Market will be held December 3rd at the VFW at 2013 Ronald Reagan Highway. Contact Mrs. Tiffany Cyprian at 985-710-5699. There will be a Stop the Violence and Unity Program at Peter Atkins Park on September 17 and September 18, 2022. It will be held by Mr. Rob Laurent. His Contact number is 504-285-1563. He stated just a reminder of the 2nd annual GALA with the theme 1950's Sock Hop, for 7:00pm, November 04, 2022 at the Trinity Banquet Hall in Slidell with the guest speaker Jim Craig.

2. District B –

Councilman Botsford gave updates for the food bank. The donations are still way down, so if you can please host a food drive at your business or a neighborhood, it would be greatly appreciated. The averages for August were 79 households daily, and 99 boxes. As of August 22nd, the total to date is 1112 total households and 1381 total boxes. They have a new offsite distribution at Midway Church in Folsom that started September 7, 2022. They will do distributions from this site on the first and third Wednesday of each month. Anyone need of food must register. Ms. Terri Turner-Marse has been in charge of the Northshore Food Bank for many years and is stepping down. Ms. Yvette

Roussel will be taking over her position. Ginger Kunkle will be moving into Yvette's position. They have a new employee, Mary Beth Bergeron. She will be in charge of the Volunteers and Food Drive Programs. The most needed items are low sodium items, oatmeal, canned vegetables especially okra and spinach. Diabetic items needed are Low sugar canned fruits and juices, unsweetened cereal, and brown rice. September is hunger action month. We encourage everyone to find ways to donate. Black Flower Apparel in downtown Covington will be hosting a food drive and they're offering 15% off purchases. The Southern Hotel will be service special orange drink which is a Satsuma Cilantro Margarita with a tahini rim with \$5 from each drink being donated to the food bank. Zumba with the Mayor held a food drive. The Mayor stated it was a good turnout. Community Health and resource fair will be on September 22, 2022 from 8:30am to 11:30 am at the Covington Community Garden at 1250 W 27th Ave. in Covington. Reminder of the Farmers Market every Wednesday and Saturday. Shop local.

3. **District C–**

Councilman Roberts stated he noticed more green waste being picked up. He wanted to acknowledge Police Chief Ferrell in noticing more of a Police presence since school started. He thanked Public Works for everything they do. He stated Steven Mitchel with the Covington Fire Department put on an event this past Saturday, September 10 the 5K run for Tunnels of Towers recognizing the firefighters that lost their lives September 11, 21 years ago. Approximately 10,000.00 was raised. He thanked all the firefighters out there for what they do.

4. **District D –**

Councilwoman Ludwig asked since we are in the middle of the budget, is there something that could be put in the budget concerning the discussion of the closing of the trace from Covington. **Erin Bivona, CAO responded by stating** if a plan is developed with a cost estimate and you want to put it in between introduction and adoption of course the council is able to do that. **Councilwoman Ludwig stated** they have not replaced Melissa Hodgson from STPH. On Tuesday September 19, 2022 they will be doing Healthier Northshore cooking demonstrations. The first will be with Chef Dave Salazzo of Del Porto Restorante of Covington. The St. Tammany Parish Library offers free resources to students as well a safe haven for kids after school. Oxtoberfest Beer & Bites will be October 14, 2022 from 6-9pm at the Covington Trailhead and Oxtoberfest Beer Fest will be October 15, 2022 from 3-6pm at the Covington Trailhead. Tickets can be purchased at www.oxtoberfest.org.

5. **District E -**

Councilman Verret stated that there are a couple of events that will be happening with the Covington Heritage Foundation. The first event will be the Whisperings. It will be a living history tour of Covington's Cemetery No. 1 on October 30, 2022 with modern day actors portraying historic personages that are buried in the Cemetery. In order to participate, one has to be a member of the Covington Heritage Foundation. Tickets are available at www.bontempstix/whisperings.com. Memberships for the Covington Heritage Foundation are available at www.covingtonheritagefoundation.com at the cost of Student: \$10/year,

Individual: \$25/year, Couple: \$40/year, and Business: \$100/year. The History & Holly Home Tour will be on December 4, 2022 from 2:00pm to 5:00pm in Old Covington and these tickets are available at www.bontempstix.com.

6. Councilman At Large (Vice President)

Councilman Smith stated the Bluesberry Festival is October 8, 2022 from 11:30am to 9:00pm at the Bogue Falaya Park in Covington. Tickets can be purchased at www.eventbrite.com. He stated there was an emergency issue on Jahnke Avenue involving a pine tree hanging over the street. He contacted Jim O'Berry director of Public Works, and they contacted the homeowner, and the tree has been removed. Councilman Smith thanked and acknowledged a good job to Public Works. He noted he took a ride where the speed bumps and polls were set, and he would like to hear what feedback is coming in from them.

7. Councilman At Large (President)

Council President Rolling stated Councilman Botsford forgot to mention he was one of the models at the Food Bank Resale Shop Fashion Show.

Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Mark Johnson stated

- a. A few events that are happening in September are:
September 16th Sunset at the Landing 6pm-9pm
September 20th the Mayor Marks Blood Dr. 10am -6pm at Bogue Falaya Hall; September 24th, Keep Covington Beautiful and the Covington Rotary Club will team up with the Bogue Falaya River Sweep which the students from Saint Paul High often come out and help; Rockin the Rails kicks off on the last Thursday of the month September 29th the first concert will be at Peter Atkins Park with Rocking Doopsie at Peter Atkins park so that's a that's a pretty big pretty big name actor coming into Covington we're looking forward to that and then it'll be every Thursday after that Rockin the Rails will be at the trailhead; Friday, September 30th, Columbia St Block Party; and also on September 30th the beginning of the St Tammany Parish Fair; On October 1st the Covington Concert Band will be presenting a concert called "Autumn Dreams". They will be representing the City of Covington at the Castine Center in Mandeville and that concert is free. In October, we have 21 events in 30 days.
- b. He stated each month he comes before the council and talks about all the wonderful things going on in the city and how great things are here. But it's not always that case. There are certain challenges that we face and there are certain mistakes that we make regarding challenges. He stated that since he became Mayor, our code enforcement officer was part time which was a real challenge for the city. We consolidated a couple of part time positions and created a full time position, and we were able to bring Wayne Mayberry back to the city. It worked out really well when Wayne came back to us. He was investigating every code enforcement case that was brought to us. He became proactive and we were making progress taking down some of the abandoned homes around the area doing really well and then

unfortunately in June 2021, Wayne was injured. He hurt his back. He tried to work through July and was unsuccessful. He took leave for the month of August. With no full-time code enforcement officer, Fire Prevention Chief Joe Ard, who has code enforcement experience picked up again fell back to being simply reactionary. Once Wayne officially retired, we were able to advertise and very fortunate to hire Mr. Dennis Hickey from the parish. Dennis is a former police officer in the City of Boston. He worked for the parish for nine years as code enforcement and he's also a Deacon at Saint Anselm's Church. He was doing a really nice job for us having stepped in at a time of the Hurricane Ida recovery. Code Enforcement was also handling every fence permit and every tree permit which was a significant amount of work. Thank you, Councilman Smith, for creating that additional position in permits because, we're going to take fences and trees out of code enforcement and move it to permits now that we have additional personnel there. This will allow code enforcement to focus more on code enforcement. In the beginning of August, Code Enforcer Dennis Hickey was involved in an automobile accident, and he has not been able to come back to work yet as of this time. We are back to fire prevention officer Joe Ard, Jim O'Berry and Chris Brown tag teaming on a reactionary. It has just been a one challenge after another with code enforcement. He thought it was important that the council know it's not because we just ignore these situations and that there's a due process that the homeowner is allowed where we have to notify them in writing and bring them to Mayors Court. It is certainly complicated when you're full time position is not being filled and wanted to share that with the council and with the public.

- c. He stated in September of 2020 the Council voted to increase utility rates for the purpose of funding the Police Department. This has had a tremendous effect on our Police Department. We went from 13 officers to 26 officers. In that same ordinance, the council called upon the administration to increase the utility rates of the residents according to the consumer price index based on inflation. The ordinance was passed in September of 2020 but didn't take effect until 15 or 16 months later normally when an ordinance has passed it takes effect in the next 30 to 60 days. So, with that in mind and extenuating circumstances he had a recovery theme of filing for FEMA. My administration failed to enact that CPI increase in January of this year and that is ultimately my responsibility. We should have done that. We have rectified it now and it will be put in place on the next bill. He stated that he wanted the council to know and wanted the residents to know that that was my responsibility, and it did not happen, and apologized to the council for not enacting that increase when it was supposed to take place.
- d. He Stated he will also address the delineators and he used the term delineator to refer to those little orange vertical poles that we placed in the center of the road near 2 not dangerous intersection but bothersome intersections. One of those is the corner of Vermont and 20th and the other one is the corner of 17th and Polk Street. The intersections where we have problems with people speeding and people running stop signs. He stated when he was campaigning and

since he has been Mayor, the most often repeated complaint, he gets throughout the city is speeding. Everyone thinks it's their street in their neighborhood but, it's really across the City. He did the research and federal guidelines specifically state do not use stop signs to slow down speeding they don't work. The study showed they don't work and if putting up stop signs stop speeding the City of Covington would not have a speeding problem because we certainly have enough stop signs. The psychology of it is the chronic speeders the ones who they don't care that they what the speed limit is they tend to roll through the stop signs anyway. So, it's actually a double whammy. One pulls up to a stop sign and they think someone is going to stop but ,they're going through it regardless. He really didn't have an idea until a few months ago one of the residents, Michael Rogers, sent him a link to a YouTube video. The video goes into the psychology of speeding. It goes into how Europe handles they're speeding. He stated it planted a seed in his mind and basically what it comes down to is just recognizing that driving is a subconscious act. The idea of having something there that snaps the driver out of sub consciousness and makes them pay attention. Now the second part to this is in when he came into office, he was asked about speed bumps. In the 1980s they would break your axle off. These speed bumps have a slight incline and it's flat on the top. One can actually drive over comfortably at 20 or 25 miles an hour but at 30 or 35 it's going to be unpleasant. It's different from the traditional speed bump and it's called a speed table. He stated he was told our emergency vehicles fire trucks and ambulances would be affected. He stated last summer he went to visit his grandchildren in Atlanta and when he came home, he asked at the staff meeting "Now tell me again why we can't have speed bumps?" Let me tell you Atlanta has fire trucks, and they have ambulances, and they have speed bumps. So, staff did the research. We have purchased a few of the speed tables and we have installed one on South New Hampshire and the whole idea is that this is experimental. We want to put it there, sit back, look at it and ask does it accomplish what we hope it will, which is slow down the speeding. The one that we've installed is actually temporary. We have used our speed box to collect data on certain roads that will measure the cars going in both directions for 24 hours a day. We are doing this for three or four days. We can determine that 8th Ave between the hospital and Jahnke Ave. really is a problem. Sometimes people think they don't have a problem and when you put the box out there you find out that they really do. They have only been out since Friday, so we really don't have a lot of a lot of feedback. We have had six requests for delineators to be placed in other areas. He stated he wished they would not have been orange and had been soccer green and still reflected . It would be more in keeping with the natural field of Covington. We will sit back and observe.

2. Erin Bivona-None

Councilman President Rolling made the following Announcements:

- **On Tuesday, September 27, 2022 at 5:30pm - 1st Budget Work Session in Council Chambers (Council Only with no Administration Present) Discussion and Questions to be consolidated and submitted to Administration by Council Clerk or Council Members can submit their questions to Council Clerk.**
- **Tuesday October 25, 2022, at 5:30pm– 2nd Budget Work Session in Council Chambers. In Attendance will be Council, Administration and Department Heads in attendance to review prior questions submitted and to finalize the 2023 Budget.**
- **November 01, 2022, Council Meeting -The 2023 Budget will be Adopted**
- **All of these meeting are open to the Public.**
- **Council President Rolling reminded everyone of the October, 2022 City of Covington Council Meeting which will be held on Tuesday, October 04, 2022 at 6pm in the Council Chambers.**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.

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

/s/_____
LARRY ROLLING
Council President

/s/_____
JOANN RUCKER
Council Clerk