



Mayor Mark - Budget Message

Part of the budget submitted to the Council includes comments from Da Mayor. Here are mine for 2026:

Financially Stable ... and Agile

We (the Administration and Council) have a responsibility to spend the taxpayers’ money judiciously. We also have a responsibility to spend it, not hoard it ... for the betterment of the community.

When assessing the budget from 80,000’, I focus on two things: our fund balance (savings) and cash flow. Regarding fund balance, GFOA requires that a city of our size keep \$3.7M in reserve (rainy day fund). Because we are subject to hurricanes, our “rainy days” can be quite severe. Hence, I recommend we keep an additional \$3.0M in reserve for a total of \$6.7M. The Council agrees.

Our budgeted expenses for 2026 versus cash on hand / projected income for 2026 will leave an additional \$2.3M in the bank on top of the \$6.7M reserve ... a nice cushion, but not enough to initiate any large new projects. Our fund balance is solid but not bloated.

A drive around downtown will reveal that our City staff is operating at 100% and that adding more projects to their plate at this time would cause a decline in the quality of work product. Hence, the 2026 budget does not call for the start of any new major projects. This pause allows us not only to rebuild our coffers but also to strive for private sector quality work as opposed to the public sector.

Regarding projecting revenue, we don’t really predict revenue. Actually, we use the amount of income we collected for the past 12 months. In a sense, we project in arrears. It’s more of a real number than a projection. It’s money we have already collected.

Cash Flow: Revenue for the past 12 months equals \$32.5M. Budgeted expenses for 2026 are \$32.477M. On the surface, this appears to be cutting it pretty darn close. What if revenue falls short? Would we experience deficit spending? The answer is, “No” because I have a Dial. Imagine the knob for the gas burner on your cooktop. By turning the knob, one can easily increase or decrease the amount of flame. When it comes to spending, I have a “dial” which metaphorically allows me to decrease spending quickly and easily without negatively impacting the quality of life of our residents.

We have 64 sewer lift stations throughout the city. We rehabilitate 3 of those each year. Each rehab is approximately \$100,000. I could dial that back to 2, 1, or 0 rehabs in a year and save up to \$300,000.

When I entered office, we budgeted \$50,000 per year towards sidewalk repairs. With the Council, we doubled that to \$100,000. That was better, but we again doubled it to \$200,000 per year. We have made great headway in sidewalk repairs in the past couple of years. If need be, I could easily “dial” that number back to \$100,000, \$50,000 or \$0, thereby saving up to \$200,000.

Over the past couple of years, we have done maintenance work on detention ponds along Mile Branch and Blue Swamp Creek. None of these ponds had ever been previously addressed. Most of the ponds have now been done. If needed, we could delay a muck-out. Savings = \$250,000.

To keep our Public Works vehicle fleet in good shape, we budget for two new pickup trucks each year. If need be, I could reduce that to 1 or 0.

All of the aforementioned are good for the City and help improve our quality of life. However, not doing any one of these does not negatively impact our quality of life. This last sentence might be a triple negative.

In conclusion, the city remains financially stable with a nice savings account, excellent cash flow and a mechanism in place to decrease spending if need be. We have enough major capital projects to keep us busy for the foreseeable future and a planned “pause” on new projects is good business.

Mayor Mark

#CovLA
January/February
2026



MARK R. JOHNSON
MAYOR

Photo by: Ron Barthet

SLOW YOUR ROLL
SLOW YOUR PACE

"One of the coolest cities in America"



Lollipop Christmas Parade



Northshore Food Bank
“Trim the Trailhead”



Christmas in Covington



PorchFEST



3 Rivers Art Fest

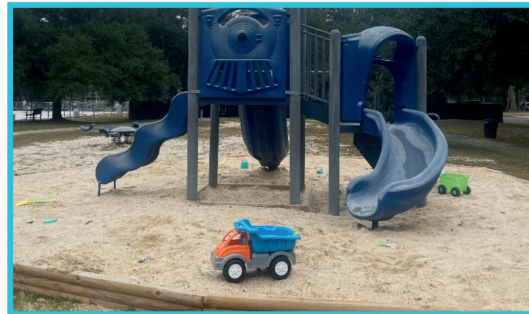
Hubie Gallagher Park *Two Birds, One Stone*



Hubie Gallagher Park (15th and S. Filmore) is one of our City's most fun neighborhood parks ... but is / was in need of some TLC. #1 was replacing the tennis courts, which is well underway. A smaller problem was the smaller slide for the smaller children. The drop-off at the bottom of the slide was as far as they were tall. Due to such a free fall, it was seldom used.

After the recent success of the sandbox at Bogue Falaya Park, I think to myself, "What if we added a sandbox at the bottom of the slides?" Public Works, using some landscape timbers from Home Depot, sand we recovered freely from Bogue Falaya Park and some hands-on craftsmanship, constructed a sand box around the bottom ... decreasing the drop-off significantly and creating a new play feature: One sandbox, two improvements.

Now, this new sandbox is In Search Of (ISO) any unused beach toys cluttering up your closet, garage or attic. Just drop them off ... I promise they will get used :).



Another big challenge for playground equipment across the city is a lack of shade. Investigations into tarp covers revealed the tarps to be costly both initially and to replace in the future. In the case of Hubie Gallagher, they would also be large and unsightly. Inspired by the 15-20' tall Nutall Oaks planted at the Trace beautification, we will be planting oak trees on the western exposure of the play sets. Nutall Oaks grow 2 to 4' per year and live to be 100-150 years old. I believe we are going to get something naturally attractive, environmentally positive and functional. That's a good combination.

Columbia Street Landing And the Healing Garden



Andrew Jackson visited on his way to New Orleans in 1814. As the northernmost port on Lake Pontchartrain, it served as the center of commerce on the north shore throughout the 19th century. Today, it is home to the Sunset at the Landing Concert series.



Over several city administrations, Columbia Street Landing developed a lovely garden with a walking path and a fountain. Huge Thank You to the Covington Garden Club for weeding, pruning, planting and nurturing over the years. But alas, a new group of resident volunteers from the Old Covington Neighborhood Association have brought renewed energy. Yes, it looks nice. But more importantly, it feels nice. Ease past the gazebo at the end of Rutland Street, down the path and embrace your own renewed spirit.



HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026

	January					
4th	Zumba w/Mayor Mark 		Sunday	12:00 PM	FREE	Bogue Falaya Hall
7th	Covington Business Association Meeting		Wednesday	5:30 PM	FREE	Urban Air and Adventure Park
8th	OnSTAGE Alfreda Sings the Divas of Soul		Thursday	7:00 PM	Tickets	Fuhrmann Auditorium
10th	St. John Fool's of Misrule March		Saturday	6:00 PM	FREE	Downtown Covington
17th	Dr. Saux's Pirate Party		Saturday	6:00 PM	Tickets	Columbia Street Taproom
19th	MLK Parade and Program		Monday	10:00 AM	FREE	Rev. Peter Atkins Park
31st	Arbor Day Tree Giveaway		Saturday	9:00 AM	FREE	Covington Farmers Market
	February					
1st	Zumba w/Mayor Mark 		Sunday	12:00 PM	FREE	Bogue Falaya Hall
4th	Covington Business Association Meeting		Wednesday	5:30 PM	FREE	St.Tammany Art Association
7th	Line Dancing with the Mayor (Before Parade) 		Saturday	5:45 PM	FREE	Boston St. Review Stand
7th	Mystic Krewe of Olympia		Saturday	6:00 PM	FREE	Downtown Covington
16th	Krewe Of Bogue Falaya's Lundi Gras Second Line		Monday	4:00 PM	FREE	Bogue Falaya Park
17th	Line Dancing with the Mayor (Before Parade) 		Tuesday	9:45 AM	FREE	Boston St. Review Stand
17th	Krewe Of Bogue Falaya		Tuesday	10:00 AM	FREE	Downtown Covington
17th	Lions Club Parade & Krewe Of Covington		Tuesday	10:15 AM	FREE	Downtown Covington
17th	Mardi Gras Parade "AFTER PARTY" Soul Revival		Tuesday	1:00 PM	FREE	Covington Trailhead
22nd	Mardi Paws		Sunday	2:00 PM	FREE	Downtown Covington

Mardi Gras COVINGTON

12TH NIGHT FEAST OF FOOLS & MARCH
JANUARY 10TH FROM 6:00 PM TO 9:00 PM

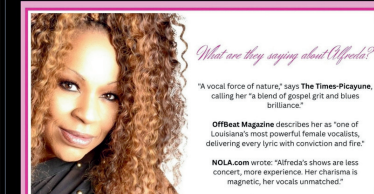
KREWE OF OLYMPIA PARADE
FEBRUARY 7, AT 6:00 PM

KREWE OF BOGUE FALAYA PARADE
FEBRUARY 17, AT 10:00 AM

KREWE OF COVINGTON LIONS CLUB PARADE
FEBRUARY 17, AT 10:30 AM

MARDI GRAS AFTER PARTY
FROM 1:00 PM TO 4:00 PM
COVINGTON TRAILHEAD

A Cultural Season at the Fuhrmann **nSTAGE** 2026



ALFREDA SINGS the DIVAS OF SOUL
Aretha Franklin . Etta James . Patti LaBelle
Whitney Houston . Tina Turner . Chaka Khan

January 8, 2026
7:00 to 8:30 PM

You may purchase tickets at bontempstix.com or Covington City Hall

