

**MEETING MINUTES  
CALLED WORK SESSION & PUBLIC HEARING FOR PLANNING COMMISSION  
TUESDAY, MAY 06, 2025**

The Council for the City of Covington held a Called Work Session and a Joint Public Hearing with the Planning Commission on **Tuesday, MAY 06, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.** in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 333 West Locust Street, Covington, Virginia.

Mayor William E. Carson, Jr. asked City Clerk, Amber Nicely to show that all Council members were present.

Council members in attendance were Mayor Carson; Vice Mayor Fred Forbes III, Councilwoman Susan S. Crowder; Councilman Raymond C. Hunter, Councilwoman Susan S. Wolfe, and City Manager Allen Dressler. City Attorney Mark Popovich was not present.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

The City of Covington Council conducted a Joint Public Hearing with Covington Planning Commission per Sections 15.2-1427 (D), 15.2-2006, and 15.2-1800 of the Code of Virginia (1950, as amended) on Tuesday, May 6, 2025 at 5:30 PM.

1. Appointed two Planning Commission members.
  - a. Jerry Morgan: Motioned to appoint Mr. Morgan, by Mayor Carson with motion being seconded by Vice Mayor Forbes. Jerry Morgan was appointed to the Planning Commission by the City Council with the following roll call votes. For Councilwoman Crowder, Councilman Hunter, Councilwoman Wolfe, Vice Mayor Forbes, and Mayor Carson.
  - b. Wayne Lamb: Motioned to appoint Mr. Lamb, by Mayor Carson with motion being seconded by Councilwoman Wolfe. Wayne Lamb was appointed to the Planning Commission by the City Council with the following roll call votes. For Councilwoman Crowder, Councilman Hunter, Councilwoman Wolfe, Vice Mayor Forbes, and Mayor Carson.

Once Mr. Morgan and Mr. Lamb were appointed to the Planning Commission, Mayor Carson handed the meeting over to the Commission for the second half of the Public Hearing. This part focused on a rezoning request from King's Tire to rezone two lots on Holly Street, specifically tax map Section 19-Block 139-Lot 3 and tax map Section 19-Block 139-Lot 4, which are owned by King's Tire. The Planning Commission took attendance, and all members were present except for Charles Smith. Eric Tyree, the Zoning Administrator, provided his evaluation report about the areas surrounding the rezoning request. He noted that residents and businesses in the area had been notified about the request, and there is support from the community for the rezoning plan. Mr. Tyree invited representatives from King's Tire, including Vice President Christopher Romney, to address the Planning Commission and the City Council about their intentions for the rezoning. Mr. Romney informed those present that they planned to place two storage containers, construct a new warehouse building for storage and repairs, and create a drive-through service area for tractor-trailers. The representatives from King's Tire fielded questions from both the Planning Commission and the City Council. Mr. Dressler informed them that there are plans for sidewalk renovations from Beech Street to Pine Street. He also offered to connect King's Tire with other businesses in the area to keep them informed about local developments. There were no speakers either for or against the rezoning request. The Planning Commission members approved the rezoning request unanimously, except for Mr. Smith, who was absent. The Commission then passed the meeting over to the City Council for their recommendations. The Council agreed to vote on the King's Tire rezoning request. Vice Mayor Forbes motioned to approve the request, with Councilman Hunter seconding the motion. The Council conducted a roll call vote, which went as follows: Councilwoman Crowder voted "For," Councilman Hunter voted "For," Councilwoman Wolfe voted "For," Vice Mayor Forbes voted "For," and Mayor Carson voted "For." The King's Tire request was approved.

The Planning Commission then adjourned their part of the meeting.

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Mayor Carson closed the Public Hearing at 5:50 PM.

Mayor Carson called the work session portion of the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Mayor Carson recommended approving the agenda. Vice Mayor Forbes made the motion to approve the agenda with Councilman Hunter seconding the motion. With Council all in favor with an “aye” vote.

There were no citizen speakers.

Mayor Carson invited Jacob Wright, a representative for The Go Virginia Initiative up to the podium to deliver his presentation about the GO Va Program. GO Virginia supports initiatives aimed at generating more high-paying jobs by fostering collaborative efforts among businesses, educational institutions, and government entities. This approach seeks to diversify and strengthen the economy across all regions of the Commonwealth. The City of Covington is part of GO Virginia's Region 2, which includes the cities of Covington, Lynchburg, Radford, Roanoke, and Salem, as well as the counties of Alleghany, Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Roanoke. Each fiscal year, GO Virginia Region 2 is allocated \$1.5 million to fund projects that create high-wage jobs throughout the region. The Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement (CECE) acts as the support organization for GO Virginia Region 2. GO Virginia focuses on four target industries: Life Sciences and Biotechnology; Information Technology, Engineering, and Emerging Technology; Transportation and Autonomous Manufacturing; and Materials and Machinery Manufacturing. Mr. Wright took Council questions and then concluded his presentation.

Mr. Dressler combined the scheduled presentations for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Budget and the Transfer Station Joint Use Agreement with Alleghany County and Bath County into his City Manager's report to the Council. He informed the Council that the Cinco de Mayo event, held on Friday evening, May 3, 2025, was a tremendous success. The prom for Alleghany High School students took place the following evening, Saturday, May 4, 2025. Many of the Prom attendees used the City of Covington's landmarks for photo opportunities. On Friday, May 9, 2025, at 6:30 PM, the City will host a community concert at Hotel Collins Park, featuring vendors and the band Phat Pocket. This event will kick off the 2025 Agony in the Alleghanies Gran Fondo, which is scheduled to begin on Saturday, May 10, 2025, at 7:00 AM. To prepare for the Gran Fondo, there will be street closures in the City of Covington starting late Friday evening. The Gran Fondo will start on Main Street in Downtown Covington and will conclude at the Clifton Forge School of the Arts in Clifton Forge, Virginia. Additionally, the annual Youth Day will be held on Saturday, May 10, 2025, at 10:00 AM. Coordinated by the Covington Parks and Recreation Department, Youth Day receives support from the Alleghany County Sheriff's Office and the Covington Police Department, along with contributions from many generous financial donors. Locally known as the Bike Rodeo, Youth Day promotes bicycle safety and identification for the children of Alleghany County. The event will offer various activities and prizes, including bicycles, for the children.

Mr. Dressler presented the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Budget for the City of Covington, which was drafted by the City's finance department under the guidance of the Finance Department and their Director David Bryant. Mr. Dressler urged the Council to review the budget information and take it home for further consideration. He asked that they compile any questions they might have so that they could meet at a later date to discuss the proposed budget. The proposed General Fund revenues amount to \$21,607,806, while the proposed General Fund expenses total \$24,499,540, resulting in a deficit of \$2,891,734. However, the city has the funds available to cover this difference. For the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the General Fund has found project and equipment needs totaling \$750,000. This includes \$150,000 distributed for sidewalks, with \$100,000 dedicated to the renovation of concrete sidewalks and \$50,000 set aside for addressing brick sidewalks. Additionally, \$50,000 is distributed for the improvement of alleys, which will involve regrading, restoning, and compacting. Some significant high expenses

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include estimated HVAC repairs at the Jeter Watson Center (locally known as the Armory), which are projected to cost \$450,000, and roof repairs at Wright Depot costing \$100,000. The heating repair at the Recreation Center is estimated at \$80,000. The total General Fund project and equipment expenses amount to \$1.9 million against a full need of \$2.8 million. Many City vehicles are in need of repairs or replacements. The City Bucket Truck has become a safety concern for employees and will need to be replaced, as will the City Street Sweeper and the Garage Shop Maintenance truck. The cost to replace these three essential City vehicles is estimated at \$820,000, and the City is able to fund these requests in cash. The City of Covington's contribution to the costs for the Alleghany Highlands Public Schools, cost is \$2.9 million, with debt service on the Jeter Watson Elementary School totaling \$1.05 million. The Department of Social Services, including the Children's Services Act, accounts for \$1.8 million, with part of this cost shared by the state of Virginia. Joint services with the Alleghany County Sheriff's Office, including the Alleghany County Jail, and legal expenses from the Alleghany County Courthouse and the Attorney for the Commonwealth of Virginia total \$892,000. Covington's share of maintenance costs for joint buildings and the courthouse are \$345,000. The City of Covington handles costs incurred by the Alleghany County Health Department and then bills Alleghany County for 50% of these expenses. Recently, the roof was replaced at the Health Department, and Alleghany County was billed accordingly. The City's electricity costs a total of \$330,000. To avoid raising taxes, the city has used the General Fund balance to cover added costs. There are no proposed tax increases in the budget. Water, sewer, and landfill services are expected to be self-sustaining. Current utility bills encompass these three enterprise accounts. The cost for water is currently \$27.50 for unlimited use. The Water Fund revenue is projected at \$2.2 million, with expenses of \$2.5 million, resulting in a deficit of \$319,000. To address this, a proposed increase of \$2 on the water utility would allow the city to meet essential requirements and avoid potential legal issues. The Sewer Fund revenue is projected to be \$1.9 million, with expenses of \$2.4 million, creating a deficit of \$489,000. A consent order requires \$8.2 million for the EQ Basin project mandated by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ). A \$4 increase in the sewer utility has been proposed, with expenses including water treatment (\$150,000), sewer operations (\$100,000), backwash and sedimentation (\$125,000), general maintenance and compliance repairs (\$285,000), and wastewater management (\$382,000). Debt service payments for water stand at \$246,000, while those for sewer amount to \$852,000. The current impact needs are a total of \$2,740,000. The Solid Waste utility will also see a proposed increase of \$4. The increase in utility costs stems from a rate study finding, the impending closure of the Peter's Mountain Landfill, and rising costs related to waste disposal at the Island Ford Transfer Station. Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) loan requirements have set the rate for enterprise accounts at a minimum of 115% for the City of Covington. An ongoing rate study is addressing the city's current shortfall. Due to the findings of the rate study, the total increase in the utility bill is proposed to be \$10. This means that the new proposed utility bill amount for the 2025-2026 fiscal year will be \$100, up from the current amount of \$90.

Due to Peter's Mountain Landfill nearing capacity and a permanent closure scheduled for August 2025, the City of Covington is seeking alternative options for waste disposal. To address this, the City has collaborated with Bath County and Alleghany County to draft a Transfer Station Joint Use Agreement. This agreement will allow the City of Covington to use the Island Ford Transfer Station as the new location for trash disposal. During the first week of the 2025 Spring Cleanup, eighty-nine tons of waste were collected and disposed of at the Transfer Station. Additionally, the waste management software at the Transfer Station will be updated to make it easier for Covington, Bath County, and Alleghany County to access information. Once Peter's Mountain Landfill closes, the City of Covington will oversee maintenance for the next 30 years, with estimated closure costs ranging from \$4 to \$5 million. The City will continue to offer Fall and Spring Cleanup services to its residents. Water Treatment and Waste Management firms have approached Mr. Dressler about the potential sale of Covington's water and wastewater treatment facilities. He has decided to decline any offers to outsource these services. Mr. Dressler concluded his part of the meeting.

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**TUESDAY, MAY 06, 2025**

Vice Mayor Forbes read the agenda for the upcoming meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 13, 2025. He then motioned to approve Resolution R-25-14, and the Council responded with a unanimous "aye." Next, Vice Mayor Forbes motioned to approve Resolution R-25-15, which also received a unanimous "aye" from the Council. He then motioned to approve Resolution R-25-16, with the Council again responding with a unanimous "aye". Following that, Vice Mayor Forbes motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the April 1, 2025, and April 8, 2025 meetings, which the Council approved with another unanimous "aye". Finally, Vice Mayor Forbes proposed the appointment of Christopher Mentz to the Covington City Housing Authority, and the Council voted in favor, again with unanimous "aye" votes.

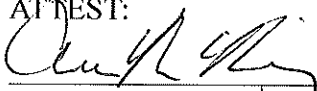
No new business to come before the Council.

Vice Mayor Fred Forbes motioned to adjourn the meeting with Mayor Carson seconded. Followed up with an all in favor vote of "aye" by Council.

With no further business coming before the Council, the meeting was adjourned.

  
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WILLIAM E. CARSON JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
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RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

AMBER NACOLE NICELY, CITY CLERK