

MEETING MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING - REVISIONS TO CHAPTER 42, TAXATION, ARTICLE VI, TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST, 12, 2025

The Council for the City of Covington held a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, August 12, 2025, at 6:30 PM** in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 333 West Locust Street, Covington, Virginia.

PUBLIC HEARING: Notice is hereby given that the Council for the City of Covington, Virginia, will conduct a Public Hearing under Section 15.2-1427 of the Code of Virginia (1950, as amended) on Tuesday, August 12 at 6:30 p.m. to consider adopting certain revisions to Chapter 42, Taxation, Article VI, Transient Occupancy Tax. There were no citizen speakers for the public hearing. Mayor Forbes requested a motion to close the public hearing. The motion was made by Councilman Hunter and seconded by Councilwoman Wolfe.

With the public hearing closed City of Covington Council opened their regular session meeting with Mayor Fred F. Forbes III called the meeting to order. Mayor Forbes asked City Clerk Amber Nicely to show all council members in attendance.

Council members in attendance were Mayor Fred F. Forbes III, Councilwoman Susan S. Crowder, Councilman Raymond C. Hunter, and Councilwoman Susan S. Wolfe. Also in attendance was City Manager Allen Dressler, Director of Finance David Bryant and City Attorney Mark Popovich.

Pastor Stan Sizemore delivered the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

A moment of silence was observed to honor the memory of Mayor William E. "Lance" Carson, Jr. of Covington, Virginia, who passed away on Saturday, July 19, 2025, after a courageous battle with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. At the time of his passing, Mayor Carson was actively serving as Mayor of the City of Covington Council. His courage, leadership, and dedication to the Council and the community will be deeply missed. The moment of silence was started at the request of Mayor Forbes.

The council unanimously approved the agenda for tonight's meeting, with Mayor Forbes requesting a motion. Councilman Hunter made the motion to and Councilwoman Wolfe seconding it. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.

APPOINTMENTS

1. **To appoint Mayor Fred Forbes to the Roanoke Regional Partnership Board of Directors:** To fill the unexpired term of the late Mayor Carson. Councilwoman Crowder motioned to approve appointing Mayor Forbes with Councilwoman Wolfe seconding the motion. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
2. **To consider and appoint a new City Council member to the Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC):** To fill the unexpired term of the late Mayor Carson. Council tabled this appointment for the next meeting scheduled for Tuesday September 02, 2025. Council needs more information on meeting times in order to see who the best fit Council member for the RVARC. With Councilwoman Crowder making the motion to appoint and second by Councilwoman Wolfe. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
3. **To consider and appoint a new representative to the Covington Housing Authority:** To fill the unexpired term of Tammy Wilson. Ms. Wilson's resignation is effective and will no longer be able to serve on or after August 31, 2025. To consider appointing Kayla Jones, who has submitted a letter of interest and resume to fill the upcoming seat vacancy of Tammy Wilson on the Covington Housing Authority. Council tabled this appointment for a future date. Clarification will be needed if Ms. Jones can be appointed due to her residence in Lexington, Virginia. With Councilwoman Crowder making the motion to approve and second by Councilwoman Wolfe. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

1. **To consider and vote on Ordinance O-25-06:** To amend and reenact Chapter 42 of the Covington City Code, which pertains to taxation, specifically Article VI regarding the Transient Occupancy Tax. The Virginia General Assembly has enacted certain amendments to the transient occupancy tax regulations, and the Covington City Council will need to revise the city code to align with these amendments. With Mayor Forbes making the motion to approve and second by Councilwoman Crowder. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
2. **To consider and vote on Resolution R-25-24:** City of Covington Police Department - DARE Contributions - \$800 (No City Match). With Mayor Forbes making the motion to approve and second by Councilwoman Crowder. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
3. **To consider and vote on Resolution R-25-25:** VA 911 Services Grant \$150,000 (No City Match) for Next Generation 911 Equipment and software. With Mayor Forbes making the motion to approve and second by Councilwoman Crowder. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
Mr. Dressler recognized and congratulated City of Covington Police Chief Christopher Smith for applying for this grant and receiving it. City Council expressed their gratitude towards Chief Smith.
4. **To consider and vote on Resolution R-25-26:** Opioid Settlement Recoveries totaling \$7,515.45. (No City Match). With Mayor Forbes making the motion to approve and second by Councilwoman Wolfe. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
5. **To consider and vote on Resolution R-25-27:** School capital improvements by City fund - School Funds returned to the City for the Fiscal Year June 2024- July 2025 of \$656,341.00. With Councilman Hunter making the motion to approve and second by Councilwoman Wolfe. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
Mr. Dressler showed his gratitude to Council for appropriating these funds for the school capital improvements. Mr. Dressler informed the council of several improvements made to benefit the Alleghany County Public School teams. Field E's lights were upgraded. Still need to address the Dugouts for the girls Fastpitch Softball field. Upgrades to the lights at Casey Field is planned for this upcoming year.

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6. **To consider and vote on Resolution R-25-28:** General Fund - Covington Parks and Recreation donations for the annual Youth Day from local businesses of \$350.30 (No City Match). With Councilman Hunter making the motion to approve and second by Councilwoman Wolfe. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
7. **To consider and vote on Resolution R-25-29:** The City of Covington is requesting the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, as well as the Director of the Department of Historic Resources, to officially recognize the Jackson River Sports Complex as a public recreational area. This recognition will help the city seek funding grants from the Commonwealth Transportation Board for the development of a proper access road to the park. With Councilwoman Wolfe making the motion to approve and second by Councilman Hunter. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
Mr. Dressler informed the council that this is a program available through the Department of Transportation (VDOT). He also informed the council that this was a project that the City of Covington attempted to work on before, but it was never completed. Since recent reorganization of the city management, the city decided to pursue this grant for a second time in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and the city's engineering firm, Thompson & Litton. This is a potential grant of up to \$250,000 with no city match. There will be plans to pave the rest of the loop road, access to the golf driving range, access soccer fields and the multiple baseball fields, access to mini golf, access to the playground by the mini golf, and access to the boat launch ramp at the Jackson River Sports Complex.
8. **To consider and vote on Resolution R-25-30:** A Resolution of Respect: Honoring Mayor William E. Carson Jr. With Mayor Forbes making the motion to table until a future meeting, and second by Councilman Hunter. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council. Council tabled R-25-30 to allow Mayor Carson's family the ability to attend and receive a signed copy of the resolution.

Mayor Forbes read the minutes from the July 2025 meetings for approval.

1. Joint Public Hearing with Planning Commission and Work Session July 01, 2025
With Mayor Forbes making the motion to approve and second by Councilwoman Wolfe. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.
2. Regular Meeting July 08, 2025
With Councilwoman Wolfe making the motion to approve and second by Councilman Hunter. With an all in favor "aye" votes from the council.

Mr. Dressler delivered his report to the council. He started off with recognition and expressed his sympathies to Mayor Carson's family and friends for the loss of Mayor Carson. Mayor Carson was a very caring man. He worked with the community his whole life. Mayor Carson cared about the employees of the City of Covington. Every year Mayor Carson would have the City Manager's Assistant Rebecca Nuckols order Christmas cards, and he would have written a note for each and every individual employee. He was supportive and believed in the City of Covington and its employees. Due to the loss of Mayor Carson, Vice Mayor Forbes has transitioned and assumed the role of Mayor for the City of Covington Council for the remainder of the term which expires on Wednesday, December 31, 2026. Mr. Dressler asked for the City Attorney Mark Popovich to come up after the end of Mr. Dressler's report to update the council on what has happened and what is to come for the Interim District 1 seat vacancy, due to the loss of Mayor Carson.

The mini golf course and new playground at the Jackson River Sports complex are now open and has had a lot of visitors in spite of the high temperatures. The cabana and the walking area have been a nice addition to the complex.

The ongoing paving project throughout the city just completed the areas of Wildwood Drive, Pitzer Ridge, Parklin Heights, and the contractor is almost done with the Asbury Street. In the upcoming weeks, paving will be postponed due to the contractor having a project in Clifton Forge. Once the contractor completes the Clifton Forge project, the contractor will resume paving other City of Covington roads, starting with a complete paving of the entire Mid City mall parking lot.

Mr. Dressler thanked the public for reporting when roads or other types of maintenance of the city are required. This allows the city to repair areas that they may be unaware of.

The Last load of refuse went to the Peter's Mountain Landfill on July 31, 2025. With the first day of trash being now transferred to the Island Ford Transfer Station.

Terri McClung, City of Covington's Small Business Coordinator, collaborated with Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Virginia Main Street (VMA) program, Friends of Southwest Virginia (SWVA), and a consulting firm from Michigan and provided a walking tour of Main Street, Covington, to the area citizens. Citizens enjoyed their tour. They got to walk around to vacant building and post what they would like to see in that building with post it notes. The tour also highlighted Main Street Park, the 701 Train Engine, Casey Field, and the Jackson River Sports Complex. They were in awe upon learning that the city owns and maintains the cemetery and keeps it in great condition. Everyone was impressed by the work of Public Works with the flowers and how clean the city is. The report from the consulting firm will come out in sometime October 2025.

On Tuesday, August 05, 2025 the City of Covington's Police Department held the National Night Out community outreach event for Police, Fire, and First responders to promote police, fire, and first responders. The National Night Out event was a success with many citizens in attendance. Complementary activities that were available to the citizens were access to the city pool that evening, many different games, including a dunk tank were citizens got to dunk Chief of Police Smith. The city also provided hot dog meals with chips and a drink.

On Saturday, August 02, 2025, The Relay for Life of Alleghany held their 2025 Race to End Cancer event at the Jackson River Sports Complex. The event raised over \$20,000.

The Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce received the EV Charging Stations today, Tuesday, August 12, 2025 and will be installed at a later date.

Friday, August 08, 2025 through Sunday, August 10, 2025, Kars Unlimited hosted its 44th Annual StreetScene event. One of the vendors that was in attendance was The VA250 Mobile History Museum staff were impressed by the attendance of the event. They informed Mr. Dressler that this is the most visitors that they have ever had for their mobile museum at any

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of their past destinations. Mr. Dressler expressed his gratitude to the city Public Works crews for keeping downtown clean during and after the event. The event kicked off on Friday night at the Jackson River Sports Complex with music by the band Five Shades of Gray. Saturday, downtown, starting at 10am, there was a live DJ throughout the day and the annual car show. There weren't as many classic cars in attendance as past events, but the event still attracted a large crowd. Saturday night at the Jackson River Sports Complex the band Buddy Allen featuring Cheat River performed at 6PM. The night ended with a wonderful Firework show at 10PM.

Saturday, August 09, 2025, all five fields at the Jackson River Sports Complex were occupied by the girls Fastpitch Softball tournament for Greenbrier County, West Virginia girls' softball teams.

At the end of the busy weekend, Mr. Dressler was thankful and proud of Public Works and Covington's Parks and Recreation staff for making sure the city was cleaned and that bleachers and tables were promptly put away, making the city clean and normal for Sunday morning church services. He said another thing he was proud of was seeing all the area children and adults taking pictures with the love sign that is downtown, this is what makes Covington Virginia, and he is proud that this is our city.

Alleghany High School Junior Varsity Football team, the Alleghany Cougars, will scrimmage Thursday, August 14, 2025 at 6PM at Casey Field.

The Covington Middle school team has been using the new field house at Casey field, frequently.

Waiting on Columbia Gas to come and set up gas for heating the field house water to showers.

On Friday, September 05, 2025, the new restrooms at Casey Field will be open for use.

Mr. Dressler concluded his report and then welcomed Council questions.

Councilwoman Crowder asked for an update on Rayon Bridge. Mr. Dressler advised her that the Rayon Bridge project will start either October 2025 or November 2025 that is anticipated to be completed by September 2026. Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is working with two of our engineering firms to address the waterline that runs across Rayon Bridge. To prevent restricting access to South Covington the old bridge will stay in place until the new bridge is completed, unless the old bridge doesn't pass inspection.

Councilwoman Crowder asked if the city should put up flashing lights for tractor trailer drivers. Mr. Dressler advised it is posted with low gradings, weight limits, and warnings per VDOT requirements. Councilwoman Crowder advised that in spite of these postings she is noticing more tractor trailer traffic. She is concerned that it may put more strain on the old bridge, she stated she was unsure of the load weight of the trucks going through. Mr. Dressler assured Councilwoman Crowder that due to these postings, if a truck drivers choose to ignore any of these postings, in order to use the old bridge, then the driver will be responsible for any incidents that may occur from ignoring these warnings.

Councilman Hunter asked for an update on the sidewalks for Alleghany Avenue. Mr. Dressler informed Mr. Hunter that the bid for this project is now closed and they received all the final information this past Friday, August 08, 2025. The contractor is hopeful of getting rewarded and getting started in the next couple of weeks. The current delay is because Mr. Bryant and Mr. Dressler are under negotiations with VDOT, to get more money. The quotes for the Alleghany Avenue sidewalk project came in higher than they had expected. Once funds are received, the anticipated start date will be around the first week of September 2025. If VDOT cannot help with extra funding then it will cost the city a little more than what they had hoped for.

Councilman Hunter asked for an update on alleyway repairs. Mr. Dressler informed him that Public Works Director, Mr. Lowry is currently making a list for Mr. Dressler of all the alleys in the city that need repairs. Lowry is also preparing a list of concrete sideways that need repairs, and the roadways that need to be paved this fiscal year.

Councilman Hunter asked about the alleyway behind Pine Street Baptist Church. There is a tree that is growing from an adjacent property over the alley. Mr. Dressler asked if Councilman Hunter knows if the owner would be upset if the tree was removed. Councilman Hunter advised he wasn't sure, but he recommends that it would be cut down because last year Public Works went up there and trimmed it, but it still continues to grow over each year causing some inconvenience to citizens that use the alleyway.

Councilman Hunter also requested that Chief Smith increase police patrols on Alleghany Avenue. Councilman Hunter has had multiple complaints and has witnessed himself cars racing on Alleghany Avenue. He advised it isn't at a particular time of day it has been reported to occur at all times, day and night. He said that just the other night he witnessed two Mustangs racing at around 1AM to 2AM.

Mr. Dressler and Chief Smith will get a plan together for this issue.

Mr. Dressler asked Councilwoman Crowder if she is still getting complaints of speeding on Jackson Street. Councilwoman Crowder advised that she has not received complaints recently, but she has seen people stopped by Police Officers.

Mr. Dressler finished his section and asked City Attorney Mark Popovich to come up to the podium to update Council on the next steps for filling the seat vacancy in District 1 due to the passing of Mayor Carson.

Mr. Popovich started off by saying that the situation to fill Mayor Carson's vacant seat is not an easy one for the city to take on, but it must be done due to the state of Virginia's legal requirements. The council must reconstitute the council and fill the seat vacancy.

He has looked over the City Charter, the Council By-Laws, and State Laws to draft a list of steps that council will need to take to satisfy these requirements.

First step under city charter §section 3.06 indicates that if there is a vacancy in the Mayor's position that the Vice Mayor shall become the Mayor for the remainder of the unexpired term. By operation of the charter, Mr. Forbes will now take the role as Mayor until December 31, 2026.

Due to the transition of Mr. Forbes from Vice Mayor to Mayor, council now has a vacancy in the Vice Mayor position. Per Council By-Laws §Section 2-7 states, it is up to council when they would like to address this vacancy or if they would like to keep it vacant for the remainder of the term until December 31, 2026. It is his recommendation that council wait until the Interim seat vacancy for District 1 is filled and then have a full council to vote and appoint a Vice Mayor out of the complete council makeup.

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Under Virginia Code 24.226 City Council had 15 days since the vacancy occurred to file a Petition for Writ of Election to the Alleghany County Circuit Court Clerk for Special Election request. Mr. Popovich's office filed this on Wednesday, July 23, 2025. The election will be held during General Elections on Tuesday November 4, 2025.

However, due to Virginia code section §24.2.288 (A) says that the remaining members of council had 45 days from the vacancy occurring to fill the vacancy of District 1 by appointing an Interim District 1 Council member. This appointment must be done on or by Tuesday, September 02, 2025. He also informed Council that the city has started advertising for interested persons for this vacancy and who reside in District 1, that started on Tuesday, July 29, 2025. The advertisement requests for Candidates to submit their resume to the Council City Clerk by end of day on Friday, August 15, 2025. This will give council plenty of time to look over the resumes to make an informed decision.

Once this has been completed, council is then required to hold a Public Hearing at least 7 business days prior to making an Interim appointment for District 1. This Public Hearing must announce the candidates and have the candidates resume available for public viewing.

Mr. Popovich asked council if anyone had questions.

Councilman Hunter asked if the candidates have to reside in District 1. Mr. Popovich advised that the Candidates must reside in District 1 to qualify for the seat.

With no other questions from council Mr. Popovich concluded his update.

New business that was discussed was the upcoming steps to appoint an Interim District 1 Council Member. Mr. Dressler asked council if they have dates that they would want to set. Councilwoman Wolfe suggested August 27, 2025. Mr. Popovich advised that this date wouldn't be enough time to advertise because of the 7 business days to advertise for the Public Hearing to announce the candidates and then wait another 7 business days after the Public Hearing has occurred before council can appoint.

Mr. Dressler advised council to have Ms. Nicely send the public hearing notice by Thursday August 14, 2025. Have the Public Hearing on Monday, August 25, 2025.

The Public Hearing notice to announce the Interim District 1 Candidates was advertised on the city's website, city's Facebook page, and to local media sources and print, starting on Wednesday, August 13, 2025.

Mr. Bryant asked Mr. Popovich if council could meet on their work session day to avoid an additional meeting. Mr. Popovich advised that it is allowed, and the work session agenda can be utilized as the public notice.

I asked Mr. Popovich if the Council can make the appointment on the deadline date and he advised that council could meet on Tuesday, September 02, 2025 and make the Interim District 1 appointment.

Mr. Popovich also informed council that the 9/02/2025 deadline isn't a hard deadline but if council doesn't make the decision by 9/2/2025 then Circuit Courts can step in and make the appointment.

Mr. Dressler went over the next steps briefly. Public Hearing notice sent out to media by Thursday, August 15, 2025. Hold Public Hearing on Monday, August 25, 2025 at 6PM. On Tuesday, September 02, 2025 appoints the new councilmember at the scheduled work session.

Old business from Tuesday, July 08, 2025, regular meeting. Citizen Mrs. McMillion came to speak to council about the state of the sidewalks outside of her residence at 217 Spruce Street, Covington, Virginia. Mr. Dressler updated the council that the he, the Director of Public Works, Anthony Lowry, and Finance Director, David Bryant, have all inspected the sidewalks around her residence. The sidewalks are in poor condition and will need repairs. It is a disabled sidewalk once it gets to this point it relays on the city to repair them. The sidewalks are the historic brick sidewalks. They have to look at what codes say about repairs for these and will make a plan that is appropriate and comply with respecting the historic aspect of the sidewalks in that area.

There were no citizen speakers before adjournment.

With no further business coming before the Council, the City Council regular session for Tuesday, August 12, 2025, was adjourned. Mayor Forbes recommended adjourning the meeting. Councilman Hunter made the motion to adjourn, and Mayor Forbes seconded the motion. The Council voted unanimously in favor.


FRED F. FORBES III., MAYOR

ATTEST: 
RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:
AMBER N. NICELY, CITY CLERK