

**MEETING MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026**

The Council for the City of Covington held a joint public hearing with the Covington Planning Commission on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 333 West Locust Street, Covington, Virginia. The public hearing was followed by the City of Covington Council's regular meeting at 6:30 PM.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Fred F. Forbes III opened the public hearing at 6:00 PM. Mayor Forbes asked City Clerk Amber Berberette to take attendance. All Council Members were present: Councilwoman Susan S. Crowder, Councilman David B. Goff, Councilwoman Susan S. Wolfe, Vice Mayor Raymond C. Hunter, and Mayor Fred F. Forbes III. Also in attendance were Covington City Finance Director David Bryant and City Attorney Mark Popovich. Once Council attendance was completed, Mayor Forbes turned the public hearing over to the Covington Planning Commission.

Covington Planning Commission Chairman Jerry Morgan asked Building and Zoning Administrator Eric Tyree to take Planning Commission attendance. The following Covington Planning Commission members were present: Chairman Jerry Morgan, Vice Chairman Charles "CW" Smith, John "Jay" Crowder, and Wayne Lamb. Covington Planning Commission member Gene Mundy was not present.

After attendance, Planning Commission Chairman Morgan asked Mr. Tyree to provide an introduction regarding the purpose of the public hearing. Mr. Tyree advised that this was a Special Exception request for Sherry Barker regarding the property located at 515 E. Cypress Street (Lot 20, Block 293, Section 8), which is zoned C-2. Mrs. Barker is requesting a Special Exception Permit to allow a freestanding structure that was installed as a replacement for the former front awning prior to receiving approval. This request seeks authorization for the structure to remain on the property.

Once Mr. Tyree completed his introduction, Chairman Morgan invited property owner Donald Sabara to speak on behalf of the Special Exception Permit. Mr. Sabara stated that he did not obtain a permit to build the new awning because the Covington Building and Zoning Administrator at the time informed him that a permit was not required. Mr. Sabara installed new wood posts and supports for the front awning. He explained that he wanted to improve the appearance of his store and, most importantly, ensure safety. The old awning did not have support posts and was rotting.

There were no speakers against the Special Exception.

There were no speakers in favor of the Special Exception.

Once Mr. Sabara finished speaking, the Covington Planning Commission began their round of questions. The questions revolved around the safety and stability of the new awning. Mr. Sabara agreed to do whatever was necessary to make the structure legal and safe. After the Planning Commission completed their questions, the City of Covington Council asked Mr. Sabara additional questions.

City of Covington Council members stated their primary concern was safety, since the work was completed without a permit and involved materials that may not have been appropriate for business zoning.

Chairman Morgan asked if there were any additional questions for Mr. Sabara. Once City Council completed their portion of questioning, both the Covington Planning Commission and the City of Covington Council voted on the Special Exception request with the following results:

Covington Planning Commission votes were as follows: Chairman Morgan – For; Vice Chairman Smith – For; Mr. Crowder – For; and Mr. Lamb – For. The Special Exception was approved by the Covington Planning Commission with 4 votes FOR and 0 votes against.

City of Covington Council votes were as follows: Councilwoman Crowder – For; Councilman Goff – For; Councilwoman Wolfe – For; Vice Mayor Hunter – For; and Mayor Fred Forbes – Against. The City of Covington Council approved the Special Exception request with 4 votes FOR and 1 vote against.

Chairman Morgan asked if City Council had anything further to discuss. Mayor Forbes stated that the reason for his vote against the Special Exception request was that he would have preferred Mr. Sabara obtain a permit prior to beginning work on the storefront.

With no further discussion from the Covington Planning Commission or the City of Covington Council, the public hearing was closed at 6:24 PM.

REGULAR MEETING

The Council for the City of Covington held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 6:30 PM in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 333 West Locust Street, Covington, Virginia.

Mayor Fred F. Forbes III opened the meeting at 6:30 PM. Mayor Forbes asked City Clerk Amber Berberette to take attendance. All Council Members were present: Councilwoman Susan S. Crowder, Councilman David B. Goff, Councilwoman Susan S. Wolfe, Vice Mayor Raymond C. Hunter, and Mayor Fred F. Forbes III. Also in attendance were Covington City Finance Director David Bryant and City Attorney Mark Popovich.

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City Manager Allen Dressler delivered the Invocation. Mayor Forbes then asked those present to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Forbes reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Mayor Forbes motioned to approve all agenda items. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Hunter and seconded by Councilwoman Wolfe.

Mr. Bryan Knick Sr., of 517 N. Beverly Avenue, Covington, Virginia 24426, addressed Council. He advised that there is a large culvert adjacent to his property that has degraded and the ground is sinking. He stated it has been in this condition for several years and that he has previously requested City assistance. He informed Council that the situation has worsened and requested someone come to look at it. Mr. Dressler advised Mr. Knick that someone would assess the issue, but repairs may not occur until the 2026–2027 fiscal year.

There were no appointments for Council to consider.

Mr. Dressler asked Mrs. Berberette about the status of Mr. Gene Wood’s oath for his appointment to the Industrial Development Authority (IDA). Mrs. Berberette advised that it was discovered Mr. Wood did not take his oath after being reappointed to the IDA. Mr. Wood will need to be reappointed and sworn in again. Mr. Wood will be reappointed at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 10, 2026.

There were no ordinances for Council to consider.

Council considered Resolution R-26-01: January 2026 Opioid Settlement Recoveries totaling \$19,113.71 (No City Match). A motion was made by Vice Mayor Hunter and seconded by Councilwoman Wolfe to adopt the resolution. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Council considered Resolution R-26-02: Parks and Recreation – Litter Grant \$5,320.95 (No City Match). A motion was made by Vice Mayor Hunter and seconded by Councilwoman Wolfe to adopt the resolution. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Council considered Resolution R-26-03: Commonwealth of Virginia Assistance to Firefighters Grant \$28,246.38 (No City Match). A motion was made by Vice Mayor Hunter and seconded by Councilwoman Wolfe to adopt the resolution. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Council reviewed the December 2025 meeting minutes requiring approval: December 2, 2025 Work Session; December 9, 2025 Regular Meeting; and December 19, 2025 Called Meeting. A motion was made by Vice Mayor Hunter and seconded by Councilwoman Wolfe to adopt these minutes. All three sets of minutes were approved and adopted by Council.

City Manager Allen Dressler presented his report.

Sidewalk project on Alleghany Street has progressed during warmer days.

Currently accepting and reviewing bids for the South Covington sidewalk project.

Additional funding will be needed to continue the alley project, as many alleys are in poor condition and gravel.

DEQ advised that there is a drought watch for Northern and Southeast Virginia; residents are encouraged to be mindful of water usage.

The New Year’s Eve event hosted by Olde Town Covington was a great success. The custom ball created for the ball drop was impressive to see in Downtown Covington. Mr. Dressler thanked everyone involved.

The Rayon Bridge recently underwent maintenance and had wedges installed, changing the bridge weight limit to 6 tons maximum.

Holiday lights and décor throughout the City will be removed in the coming days.

Mr. Dressler concluded his report.

There was no new business to consider.

There was no old business to consider.

With no further business to come before Council, Mayor Forbes adjourned the meeting with “aye” votes from Council.



FRED F. FORBES III., MAYOR

ATTEST:



RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

AMBER N. BERBERETTE, CITY CLERK