

**MEETING MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026**

The Council for the City of Covington held a Work Session on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 6:30 PM in the Council Chambers of City Hall, located at 333 West Locust Street, Covington, Virginia.

Mayor Raymond C. Hunter called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and asked City Clerk Amber Berberette to call the roll. All seated members of Council were present. The following members of Council were present: Councilwoman Susan S. Crowder, Councilman David B. Goff, Councilwoman Susan S. Wolfe, and Mayor Raymond C. Hunter. The District 2 Council seat was vacant.

Also in attendance were City Manager Allen Dressler, City Attorney Mark Popovich, City Clerk Amber N. Berberette, and Stevie Steele with CHA Engineering Consulting.

Councilwoman Wolfe motioned to approve the agenda and seconded by Councilwoman Crowder. The motion carried with all members voting "aye."

Council observed a moment of silence to honor the memory of Mayor Fred F. Forbes III and his service to the community.

City Manager Allen Dressler read a memorial proclamation honoring the life, service, and legacy of Mayor Fred F. Forbes III. The proclamation recognized Mayor Forbes' public service, his election to City Council on January 1, 2023, his appointment as Vice Mayor on January 10, 2025, and his assumption of office as Mayor on July 19, 2025, following the passing of Mayor William E. Lance Carson, Jr.

The proclamation further recognized Mayor Forbes' leadership, his love for the City of Covington, his support for rehabilitation, growth, and second chances within the community, and the City's sympathy to his family, friends, and all who were touched by his life.

Mr. Dressler introduced Stevie Steele of CHA Engineering Consulting and noted the importance of reviewing the City's water, wastewater, refuse, and related utility infrastructure as part of the budget process and ongoing utility rate study by Raftelis.

Mr. Steele presented an overview of CHA and the City's water and wastewater systems. He explained that CHA serves as the City's engineering consultant and that he serves as the City's primary point of contact for CHA projects.

Mr. Steele reported that the wastewater treatment plant recently completed an \$8.2 million project, including an equalization basin and related improvements, and stated that the plant is generally in maintenance and monitoring mode. He noted anticipated smaller capital needs, including splitter box work and SCADA upgrades, and explained that annual evaluations with treatment plant staff help identify maintenance and compliance needs.

Mr. Steele reviewed the wastewater collection system. He stated that lift station upgrades were completed in 2018 and explained that the stations had been equipped with raised electrical panels to protect against flood conditions. He discussed the City's portable generator for lift stations and noted that the City's three pump stations are located in Dry Run, the Jackson Street area, and behind Whitey's. He explained that the generator would be configured so staff can connect it to each pump station safely during an emergency.

Mr. Steele explained SCADA as a system that allows staff to monitor system data, including tank levels, pump station operation, and pressure readings, in real time. Council discussed the need to expand SCADA capability to tanks and additional monitoring points so staff can identify changing pressure or flow conditions before they become larger service problems.

Mr. Steele reviewed the ongoing wastewater collection line improvements project. He stated that the project is funded through a \$5.7 million grant with no local match, and described manhole inspection, smoke testing, camera inspection, and cured-in-place pipe lining as methods used to identify and repair inflow, infiltration, broken pipe, root intrusion, and other collection system issues. He also discussed the City's new camera truck and the importance of PACP-certified inspections and documentation.

Mr. Steele and Council discussed the City's GIS system. Mr. Steele explained that GIS will allow the City to maintain a centralized map and database of water, sewer, stormwater, sidewalks, paving, pump stations, tanks, manholes, work

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orders, repair history, and other infrastructure data. Council discussed using GIS to support future maintenance and capital decisions, including identifying streets or utility lines with repeated repairs.

Mr. Steele reviewed the water treatment plant and stated that the last major upgrades were completed in 2014. He discussed preparing an updated priority list for plant components based on likelihood of failure and impact of failure, with the goal of identifying immediate, five-to-ten-year, and longer-term needs. He explained that the evaluation would help Council and the public understand which improvements are most urgent and why.

Mr. Steele reported that the City's water storage tanks have been inspected and are approved by the Virginia Department of Health to operate, but that VDH noted the need for a maintenance plan. He explained the City's new ten-year tank maintenance program, which will include inspection, washouts, painting, repairs, and other maintenance according to priority and tank condition.

Mr. Steele discussed the recent South Covington water service issue involving a 10-inch water line break on or near railroad property. He explained the difficulty of isolating the break due to limited valves and the challenges of working within the CSX railroad right-of-way. He stated that the City needs a written emergency protocol with CSX, additional isolation valves, and a plan to remove or reroute water lines from railroad right-of-way where feasible. He also discussed the relationship between the Asbury and Horse Mountain tanks and the importance of SCADA data during the emergency response.

Mr. Steele explained that the City will need to consider utility rate adjustments to maintain service levels and support necessary capital work for the water, sewer, and refuse systems. He stated that Raftelis would provide additional information to explain utility revenue needs, debt coverage, and future rate considerations. Council discussed the current combined utility rate, the need to balance affordability with system reliability, potential grant opportunities, and the future possibility of considering water meters for leak detection, consumption data, and eligibility for funding opportunities.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Mary Ellen Haynes of 2340 South Church Avenue addressed Council regarding the recent water service issues in the Edgemont area. She stated that residents were without reliable drinking water for approximately two weeks and expressed concern about communication, lack of updates, lack of bottled water, and confusion regarding safe use of water during the boil water advisory. She noted that many residents in the area are seniors and may not use social media or have reliable transportation. Ms. Haynes asked Council to consider how residents were affected and expressed dissatisfaction with the City's response.

**ITEMS FOR REGULAR SESSION AGENDA - TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2026**

Council reviewed items for the April 14, 2026 Regular Meeting agenda. There were no ordinances to consider. Council considered placing the following items on the agenda:

- Resolution R-26-09: Resolution Approving Participation in Opioid Settlement with Six Remnant Defendants.
- Resolution R-26-10: Resolution Setting the Allocation Percentage for Personal Property Tax Relief for the 2026 tax year.
- Consent Agenda items for corrections and approval of meeting minutes: March 3, 2026 Work Session Meeting Minutes; March 10, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes; and Joint Locality Meeting Minutes with Alleghany Highlands Public Schools.

Councilwoman Wolfe motioned to place the items on the agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Crowder. The motions carried with all members voting "aye."

**REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER**

City Manager Allen Dressler presented his report. He announced hydrant flushing scheduled for April 12 through April 24, 2026, from approximately 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM.

Mr. Dressler announced the City's Spring Cleanup schedule, with the east side of the railroad tracks scheduled for April 27 through May 1, 2026, and the west side scheduled for May 4 through May 8, 2026. He noted that spring cleanup is provided to City residents at no additional charge for refuse collection and that the information was included on utility bills.

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Mr. Dressler recognized refuse staff for completing holiday-related double runs and assisting residents with refuse collection before the Good Friday holiday weekend. He also reminded residents of the importance of property maintenance, including mowing grass and controlling weeds.

Mr. Dressler provided additional comments regarding the South Covington water service issue. He stated that staff worked around the clock, including water treatment plant staff, public works staff, Mr. Steele, and others. He noted that the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water, DEQ, and CSX were notified, and that the City must follow railroad requirements and obtain approval for work near the CSX right-of-way. Mr. Dressler acknowledged that communication could be improved and stated that he and Police Chief Chris Smith were reviewing options for better communitywide notification systems beyond social media and newspaper notices.

Mr. Dressler also provided updates on sidewalk projects, including Alleghany Avenue and Jackson Street; noted that the Tea Party and Easter parade went well; and reported strong activity in recent tournaments and recreational events.

**ADDITIONAL PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

An additional resident asked questions regarding the water system, the City's ability to provide emergency water distribution during future outages, red areas shown in the infrastructure presentation, street conditions, and potholes. Mr. Dressler responded that he and Chief Smith had discussed emergency water options with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and that staff would review communication and emergency response options for future incidents. He also discussed Columbia Gas work, future paving coordination, and the use of hot mix asphalt for more durable pothole repairs as weather allows.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Council discussed concerns regarding the senior center and cleaning.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Council discussed yellow markings near Prospect Street and Craig Avenue, drainage concerns in that area, and ongoing or upcoming utility, stormwater, and Columbia Gas-related work. Mr. Dressler stated that he would inquire and provide additional information.

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

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

  
RAYMOND C. HUNTER, MAYOR