

**MEETING MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2026**

The Council for the City of Covington held a Regular Meeting on Tuesday, April 14, 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 and asked City Clerk Amber Berberette to show all members present. The following seated 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 representatives of Raftelis.

The invocation was delivered by Reverend Doug Hollenbeck, after which all in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

**Utility Rates Assessment**

Chad Cowan with Raftelis introduced the utility rates assessment and explained that Raftelis reviewed the City's customer accounts, billing data, consumption data, existing debt, debt covenants, fiscal policies, and capital improvement needs in coordination with CHA Engineering Consulting. He stated that the purpose of the study was to help the City make decisions based on data regarding the financial needs of the water and sewer utility systems.

City Manager Allen Dressler stated that the study was based on the City's actual financial and utility data and that the City followed the procurement process to secure Raftelis. He thanked Raftelis for its work and noted that the information presented would assist the City as it prepares the upcoming budget.

Raftelis reviewed the City's financial forecast for water and sewer utilities. The presentation explained that the utility funds must generate revenue sufficient to cover operating and maintenance expenses, debt service, and necessary capital improvements. Raftelis noted that operating costs have increased, that the City currently pays approximately \$1.2 million annually in debt service on six outstanding VRA/state revolving fund loans, and that those loans require the City to maintain debt service coverage of 1.15 times.

Raftelis reported that the five-year capital improvement plan includes approximately \$9.1 million in water and sewer needs, including approximately \$7 million for water and \$2.1 million for sewer, and that the forecast assumed approximately \$6 million in new debt to fund projects over the life of the assets.

Raftelis reviewed the City's existing water and sewer rates and noted that inside-City unmetered residential customers currently pay a flat monthly charge of \$29.50 for water and \$38.50 for sewer, for a combined water and sewer charge of \$68.00 per month regardless of usage. The presentation compared the City's rates with regional peer utilities and explained that a flat rate can result in low-usage customers subsidizing higher-usage customers.

Raftelis stated that, at existing rates, projected utility revenues would not be sufficient to cover projected utility expenses and maintain required cash balances and debt coverage. The presentation discussed a proposed first-year increase of \$14.00 to the monthly utility bill for inside-City unmetered customers, followed by projected additional increases of \$8.00 in the second year and \$4.00 in subsequent years, subject to future review and actual utility performance.

Council and the public discussed the potential effect of water meters, customer usage, leaks, flat-rate billing, low-usage customers, high-usage customers, commercial meters, grant opportunities, and how meter data could help identify leaks and provide more accurate usage information. Mr. Dressler discussed ongoing work to repair and replace commercial meters and explained that the proposed \$14.00 increase would be presented as part of the budget process for water and sewer only, with refuse remaining unchanged at this time.

A resident asked questions regarding whether refuse could increase separately in the future. Mr. Dressler explained that the current presentation and proposed increase addressed water and sewer only, that refuse would remain the same for the upcoming budget proposal, and that any future refuse-related changes would be communicated separately. He also discussed the City's transition away from the landfill business and the long-term costs associated with closure, capping, and monitoring of the landfill.

Citizen comments were bypassed due to the length of the utility rate presentation unless anyone had additional questions. No separate citizen comments were recorded.

**Ordinances and Resolutions**

There were no ordinances to consider.

Council considered Resolution R-26-09: Approving Participation in the Opioid Settlement with Six Remnant Defendants. A motion to approve Resolution R-26-09 was made by Councilwoman Wolfe and seconded by Councilwoman Crowder. The motion carried with all members voting "aye."

Council considered Resolution R-26-10: Setting the Allocation Percentage for Personal Property Tax Relief for the 2026 tax year. It was explained that the City receives an annual state allocation for personal property tax relief and that the 2026 relief percentage was calculated at 42 percent for qualifying vehicles. A motion to approve Resolution R-26-10 was made by Councilman Goff and seconded by Councilwoman Wolfe. The motion carried with all members voting "aye."

Council considered Resolution R-26-11: Confirming Local Funding Commitment and Authorizing the Execution of a Transportation Project Agreement with the Virginia Department of Transportation. Mr. Dressler explained that VDOT

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requested an updated 2026 resolution and that the City is expected to receive approximately \$1.3 million from VDOT for transportation-related work. A motion to approve Resolution R-26-11 was made by Councilwoman Wolfe and seconded by Councilwoman Crowder. The motion carried with all members voting "aye."

There were no appointments to consider at this time.

**Consent Agenda**

Council considered the Consent Agenda consisting of the March 3, 2026 Work Session Meeting Minutes, the March 10, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes, and the March 30, 2026 Joint Local Meeting Minutes. A motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Councilwoman Wolfe and seconded by Councilwoman Crowder. The motion carried with all members voting "aye."

**Report of the City Manager**

City Manager Allen Dressler presented his report. He explained that water, sewer, and refuse are enterprise accounts and are intended to pay for themselves. He stated that the City's goal is to present a proposed balanced budget to Council in May, hold budget meetings during the month of May, and move toward approval in June for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Mr. Dressler recognized National Telecommunications Week and thanked the City and County dispatch staff for their work and service to the community.

Mr. Dressler reported on a visit with approximately 33 welcome center representatives from across Virginia at the Jackson River Sports Complex. He stated that the City showcased local recreation, trails, downtown improvements, the Discovery Center, industrial history, VTARC/STEM programming, and other projects. He noted that the City has approximately \$50 million in grants and projects in progress.

Mr. Dressler discussed upcoming and recent recreation and tourism activities, including youth baseball, girls fast pitch, T-ball, spring tournaments, activity at the Jackson River Sports Complex, VA250 events scheduled for June 11-13, 2026, fireworks and music, and a Flag Day event at the Historic Masonic Theatre on June 14, 2026. He also noted preparations for the pool season, the soft opening of the mini-golf course, and other planned activities for residents and visitors.

Mr. Dressler thanked public works, water treatment, recreation, and other City staff for their work during recent water service issues and ongoing community operations. He reported that the City was gaining ground in the Asbury and Horse Mountain tanks, though some South Covington pressure challenges remained. He also recognized City employees and families experiencing personal losses or health-related difficulties.

Council discussed the Olde Town Covington flea market date and other upcoming events. A resident then asked additional questions regarding the utility rate discussion, including the distinction between water, sewer, and refuse on the utility bill. Mr. Dressler reiterated that the proposed \$14.00 increase would be for water and sewer only and that refuse would remain unchanged in the upcoming budget proposal.

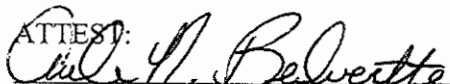
**Old Business**

Mayor Hunter stated that the senior citizens building had been cleaned earlier that day.

**New Business**

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilwoman Wolfe and seconded by Councilwoman Crowder. The motion carried with all members voting "aye."

  
RAYMOND C. HUNTER, MAYOR

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