MINUTES
CALLED MEETING
JANUARY 26, 2021 6:30 p.m.

A called meeting of the Council for the City of Covington was held on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, at 6:30 p.m., telecommunicated electronically from the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 333 W. Locust Street, Covington, Virginia.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Thomas H. Sibold, Jr. with all members present electronically as follows: Mayor Sibold, Vice Mayor David S. Crosier, Councilman William E. Carson, Jr., Councilman Raymond C. Hunter, and Councilman S. Allan Tucker.
City Manager: Krystal Onaitis City Attorney: Mark Popovich

The meeting was held electronically via Zoom. Mayor Sibold read a statement declaring that due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus health emergency and pursuant to Chapter 1283 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly, Council would convene electronically for this called meeting to transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue the operations of the City.

The purpose of the meeting was to consider amending the charter for the City of Covington by removing unnecessary language referencing the City School Board to help facilitate the consolidation of the school districts of the City of Covington and Alleghany County and set the salary for a school board member of such consolidated school district with an effective date of July 1, 2022, provided that the consolidation of the Covington and Alleghany school divisions is approved by the Board of Education prior thereto.

Mayor Sibold called the meeting to order and opened the Public Hearing. No citizen comments were emailed or mailed to the City Clerk, and no citizens requested a Zoom link to speak electronically. Mayor Sibold closed the public hearing and opened the called meeting.

Mr. Tucker asked why there was nothing in the Charter Amendment that addressed if Covington could remove itself from the school consolidation if Council feels it isn't working. City Attorney Mark Popovich stated that localities always have the ability to revert. This Charter Amendment is only a procedural process to move forward with school consolidation. A reversion doesn't require both Covington City Council and the Alleghany County Board of Supervisors to agree, but both the Covington School Board and Council must concur before asking the Virginia Department of Education and the General Assembly to revert the Charter to its former state. City Manager Krystal Onaitis reminded members that this agreement is negotiable because of the contingency for state funding for salary equalization and early retirement buy-outs. There are also fallback features in the consolidation agreement that allow a school board majority and Council majority to request the reversion. Mr. Tucker noted that he is trying to protect the City in the future in case events occur that make the reversion an impossibility.

Vice Mayor Crosier moved to approve the charter change as presented, and Mr. Tucker and Mr. Hunter seconded the motion. Prior to voting, Vice Mayor Crosier asked what the next step in the consolidation process was. Ms. Onaitis said the General Assembly would be notified of Council's vote tomorrow, and that will be forwarded to the Virginia Board of Education for their consideration on January 28. If approved, the consolidation agreement goes to the Commission on Local Government. Mayor Sibold said that Delegate Terry Austin and Senator Creigh Deeds already have bills written to present for voting in the House and Senate if the Commission on Local Government forwards the agreement on to the General Assembly. This charter amendment does not officially change the Charter but gives permission to fully change the Charter when ready to approve it.
The roll call vote showed unanimous support: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

With no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned by consensus after a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Hunter.

THOMAS H. SIBOLD, JR., MAYOR
PRESIDENT OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND,
AS SUCH, EX-OFFICIO OFFICER OF THE
CITY OF COVINGTON, VIRGINIA

ATTEST:

REBECCA W. SCOTT, CITY CLERK