

MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
DECEMBER 8, 2020

The regular meeting of the Council for the City of Covington was held electronically on Tuesday, December 8, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. 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. The invocation was given by Rev. Doug Hollenbeck. Because members were participating via Zoom, Mayor Sibold dispensed of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call of Council showed all members present electronically as follows: Mayor Sibold, Vice Mayor David S. Crosier, Councilman William E. (Lance) Carson, Jr., Councilman Raymond C. Hunter and Councilman S. Allan Tucker.

City Manager: Krystal Onaitis

City Attorney: Mark Popovich

As the meeting was conducted electronically via Zoom, Mayor Thomas 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 meeting to transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue the operations of the City.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon a motion by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Hunter, Council voted by consent to approve the agenda as presented.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

City Clerk Rebecca Scott read an email from Adam Lacks concerning the inconvenience of road closures on both Mallow Road and Edgemont Drive, asking why two projects with road closures were being completed concurrently. Mayor Sibold stated that City Manager Krystal Onaitis would deal with this in her report later.

CORRECTION AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon a motion by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Hunter, Council voted to approve the following minutes as presented: Called Meeting of November 3, 2020; Work Session of November 3, 2020; and the Regular Meeting of November 10, 2020.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Mr. Gordon Jones of Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates, PLLC, presented the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for 2020. Overall, Mr. Jones called the audit "a clean report"

that showed no material weaknesses. In areas that needed addressing, Mr. Jones noted a deficiency in internal control in the Treasurer's office that needs a segregation of duties, which he said has been in the CAFR since 2008. He stated that moving the entire tax collection process online on Munis should allow these duties to be segregated.

Mr. Jones showed that audit of the General Fund for 2020 showed a 3.19 percent growth in general property taxes and 2.17 percent in other local taxes, with an increased fund balance showing 1.11 percent less total operating expenses and debt services with 1.1 percent less because of a school board loan being completed.

In the Audit Recommendations, he noted that reporting procedures for urban highway maintenance need to be specific to the actual location. His final recommendation concerned the annual Conflict of Interest Forms required by the Virginia Ethics Council be fully completed by all members as one council member and one school board member left at least one portion incomplete on last year's forms.

Ms. Onaitis highlighted the City's "positive cash position" that grew the fund balance by \$1 million with no use of the fund balance and no department overspending its budget in 2020. However, she warned that the financial impact of COVID has yet to be determined and noted that tax delinquency was up slightly and a ten percent increase in unemployment has occurred since this time last year.

#### REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER

1. Road Improvements: On Mallow Road, at least 18 trees that were dead or presented a safety risk have been cut. The ditch around the curve has been upgraded, and drainage ditches have been lined with impervious liners. The road is slated to reopen next week, with paving and guardrail installation to follow. In regard to the question from the Citizen Comments section concerning two major road closures at the same time, Ms. Onaitis stated that the Mallow project took longer than anticipated because of the drainage issues. It is also more financially sound to keep two crews working to reduce mobilization costs that occur each time a crew moves.

Ms. Onaitis acknowledged problems with traffic control on Edgemont Drive. Although her office had communicated that only large vehicles were prohibited from using Grass and Mumford streets, the contractor's staff prohibited all traffic from those streets. The Public Works staff has installed signs for local traffic only in those areas. Another miscommunication occurred when that portion of Edgemont Drive was closed completed at approximately 3 p.m. on Friday, December 4, due to safety issues. The ground became unstable and cracks and larger fractures occurred in the asphalt, making it unsafe for even small vehicles. Police Chief Chris Smith posted a message online, and Public Works Director Allen Dressler personally addressed residents, but many residents did call her office. Mayor Sibold asked that local media, specifically listing the newspaper, radio station, and online journal, be contacted in any such event. Despite issues, the project is on schedule, and Edgemont Drive should reopen on Thursday, December 9.

2. Maple Avenue: In Phase 2, conduit is being installed and then concrete poured around it. VDOT consultants have inspected several times, and environmental work has been completed for Phase 3. VDOT staff also wants a meeting to discuss funding in case transportation alternative funds don't become available.

3. Jackson Street: Work continues on the Department of Housing and Community Development Funding Application. Two public meetings must be held; CHA consultants have completed the preliminary engineering report focusing on infrastructure and drainage.

4. Department of Environmental Quality Consent Order: Ms. Onaitis met with Thompson and Litton representatives today, which followed a joint meeting with CHA consultants on Dec. 2.

5. Main Street Revitalization Project: Consultants from Head Down Strategies will complete an on-site visit on Friday, Dec. 10. They will meet with the grant management team and complete an historical walking tour with Anne Wright.

6. Rayon Bridge: She has spoken to Delegate Terry Austin and continues to work with the VDOT district office on various funding sources for the bridge repair. An inspection will be held the week of December 14-18, with one lane slated for closure for one day.

#### UNFINISHED/OLD BUSINESS (Ordinances and Resolutions)

On a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier and seconded by Mr. Tucker, members voted 5-0 to adopt Ordinance O-20-15 regarding Chapter 8, Buildings, Section V, Spot Blight Abatement with this tally: Mayor Sibold-For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson-For; Mr. Hunter-For; Mr. Tucker-For.

Ordinance O-20-16 regarding amending and reenacting certain sections of Chapter 41, Taxation, was passed unanimously on a motion by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker. Mayor Sibold, Vice Mayor Crosier, Mr. Carson, Mr. Hunter, and Mr. Tucker all voted For. Finance Director David Bryant, who participated in the meeting, submitted a financial impact statement for delinquent taxes, penalties, and interest as was requested in the December 1 meeting.

Members also voted on a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier and a second from Mr. Tucker to pass Ordinance O-20-17 regarding amending and reenacting certain sections of Chapter 19, Storm Water Management: Mayor Sibold-For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson-For; Mr. Hunter-For; Mr. Tucker-For.

For Resolution R-20-337 regarding an \$800 contribution to DARE for the Covington Police Department, a motion was made by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker, to approve. Motion carried 5 to 0: Mayor Sibold, For; Vice Mayor Crosier, For; Mr. Carson, For; Mr. Hunter, For; Mr. Tucker, For.

## NEW BUSINESS

Vice Mayor Crosier complimented the Public Works staff for their rapid and professional response in repairing a water leak in Parrish Court in cold and wet weather. Ms. Onaitis also praised their efforts as several water main breaks occurred when the weather turned cold. Mayor Sibold praised the entire city staff in dealing with construction, water breaks, and working virtually.

## CLOSED SESSION

Upon a motion by Mr. Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker, Council completed an aye vote to move into closed session pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act Sec. 2.2-3711 (A)(3) for the discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and the investment of public funds where discussion in opening meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the City.

Following the closed session, Council reconvened and voted to certify that only the matter stated was discussed. Because the meeting was held virtually, Council members will sign the Closed Session Certification later, per instructions from City Attorney Mark Popovich.

With no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned on a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier and seconded by Mr. Tucker.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rebecca W. Scott  
City Clerk