

MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
MARCH 9, 2021

The regular meeting of the Council for the City of Covington was held on Tuesday, March 9, 2021, 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. Steve Noel, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call of Council showed all members present 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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to add Ordinance O-21-04, an Ordinance Partially Exempting Real Estate in a Revitalization Area, and a Rezoning Ordinance O-21-05 from P.C. Mini Storage, Inc., J. Frank Hepler, President, from R-3 to C-2 at 0000 E. Holly Street, to the agenda. Mr. Hunter made a second, and members unanimously agreed by consent to add both to the agenda and to approve the agenda presented.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Greg Rice addressed Council concerning the need for a fence around the playground at the old Jeter-Watson School at 515 E. Pine Street. Mr. Rice stated that as there was a lot of traffic on that street and many children using the playground now, he was concerned for their safety. Mayor Sibold told him members would consider his request when developing the budget.

CORRECTION AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon a motion by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker, Council voted to approve the following minutes as presented: Called Meeting on February 2, 2021; Work Session on February 2, 2021; Called Meeting on February 9, 2021; Regular Meeting on February 9, 2021; and a Joint Called Meeting with the Planning Commission on February 16, 2021.

APPOINTMENTS

Mayor Sibold ascertained from the City Clerk that no citizens had expressed interest in filling current open spots on boards after a newspaper advertisement was run in the *Virginian Review* on March 6. Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to reappoint Jerry Morgan to the Planning Commission, Mr. Tucker seconded the motion, and Mr. Morgan was elected by a consent vote.

On a motion by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Carson, two appointments were made to the Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Richard (Bert) Baker was reappointed, and Dawn Riddle was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Councilman Carson, which will end on August 31, 2024.

Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to reappoint Bryan Thompson to the Industrial Development Author, Mr. Tucker seconded, and Mr. Thompson was reappointed on a vote of consent.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

David Bryant, Director of Finance, shared the Second Quarter Finance Budget Summary, reminding members that because tax payments were deferred until January 5, 2021, and posting and delivery delays due to City Hall being closed, not all numbers reflected six months of

revenue. The General Fund, the largest, had approximately \$17.5-\$18 million, having been budgeted very conservatively due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and projections are favorable for the fiscal year. Public Works and Public Safety, the two departments with the largest operations budgets, were at less than fifty percent expenditures, as did all other departments but all need to maintain that throughout the year.

Revenues were down in Utilities Water and Sewer Revenues, and Mr. Bryant reminded Council that the Governor's moratorium on utility shut-offs remains in place. At the end of October, delinquent water and sewer payments topped \$42,000, but \$21,000 was recouped with CARES funding and other funding options are being explored. Solid Waste revenues are down due to reduced volume being hauled to the landfill, but he anticipates warmer weather will give more potential to increase haul volumes. Expenditures are within budget but need to be monitored closely because weather can impact operational expenditures at the landfill.

City Treasurer Theresa Harrison presented her Accountability Report, showing modest gains in the Public Fund Savings Account at Premier Bank, Governmental Finance at BB&T, and the City's Main Operating Account at BB&T. Total for all accounts at the end of December was \$10,303,590.47.

#### REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER

1. Economic Development: The Allegheny Highlands Economic Development Commission met Monday, working on business plan recommendations, a marketing plan, and revamping the website with better links and a more user-friendly format, per recommendations from advisers from Hunton and Timmons.
2. Industrial Development Authority: The IDA has met twice in the last month and approved their grant to the Allegheny Foundation for Project Sparkle. The deed for the old Rivermont School transferring ownership from the City to the IDA was recorded on March 8, and Landmark will submit their grant for the Rivermont Project on March 15.
3. Historic Main Street: The survey had 222 respondents to their community survey. Head Down Strategies will present results to Council on April 6, and they plan their Community Summit on Thursday, April 29, at Covington High School.
4. Jackson Street Grant: She has closed out the Planning Grant and is working to submit the Community Support Grant with assistance from CHA.
5. Rayon Bridge: The grant submission is final. After being reviewed by officials at the VDOT district office and then in the central office, the initial cost estimate of \$8.4 million was deemed too low, and a new replacement cost of \$11.1 million was given for total replacement, which will be used for future submissions.
6. Joint Services: The City and Allegheny County continue discussion in setting funding levels for all services in a special fund to avoid asking localities for additional allocations throughout the budget year. The group will hold a meeting on housing at the regional jail on April 2.
7. COVID: Focus has shifted to vaccinations and continuing emphasis on safety measures. The City may receive additional CARES allocations that are substantially more than the \$834,000 received in 2020.

#### UNFINISHED/OLD BUSINESS

##### Ordinances and Resolutions:

Concerning the Omnibus Ordinance O-21-03 Amending and Reenacting Certain Sections of the Code, Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to accept it, and Mr. Tucker seconded. A roll call showed the following vote: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

For Ordinance O-21-04 Partially Exempting Real Estate in a Revitalization Area (Rivermont School) for three years, Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to approve. Mr. Tucker seconded,

and the unanimous vote showed Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to accept the Rezoning Ordinance O-21-05 for P.C. Mini Storage, Inc., J. Frank Hepler, President, from R-3 to C-2 at 0000 E. Holly Street. Mr. Tucker seconded, and the vote was unanimous: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

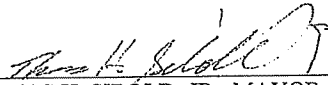
NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Hunter said that a citizen had cut brush and left it lying for nearly a year at a house across the street from Hytower Park on Marion Avenue. Ms. Onaitis will look into the matter.

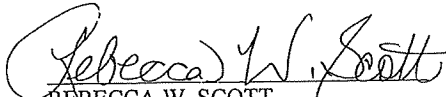
Vice Mayor Crosier was perturbed at the continuing problem with the Recycling Program. The bins at Edgemont are overflowing, scattered on the ground, and blowing onto neighbors' yards in Edgemont. While he acknowledged that the City Manager is working on a plan that she will present in May, he felt strongly that the City can't afford to wait that long and something needs to be done soon. Ms. Onaitis said a potential recycling center may be established on the Nettleton Property on Lexington Avenue, which is not strongly residential. Recycling costs have spiraled, and she has cut collections from twice weekly to one time per week. She also reminded members that a four-year report on recycling must be submitted to Department of Environmental Quality at the end of March which will impact not only Covington but the entire Highlands.

Mr. Bryant stated it costs \$545 per dump per bin. Vice Mayor Crosier pointed out that not only is this costing a tremendous amount of money, it's creating additional work and costs for administration, Public Works, and the Police Department, and Mr. Hunter added that it is also costing extra to take the overflow to the landfill. Mayor Sibold asked for her plan to be presented in April and asked Ms. Onaitis to write a letter to DEQ concerning the fact that their recycling mandates that are costing localities funds because it costs more to recycle than dump in a landfill. Ms. Onaitis asked Council to decide how recycling rates on their budget priorities, and if it is low, then funding can be cut as the new budget is finalized.

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

  
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