

MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
OCTOBER 12, 2021

The regular meeting of the Council for the City of Covington was held on Tuesday, October 12, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. at 410 W. Main Street, Covington, Virginia, for a special presentation on Olde Town Covington Business District Revitalization Plan.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Thomas H. Sibold, Jr. He reminded the audience to follow CDC guidelines regarding wearing masks and observing social distancing. The invocation was given by Rev. Bill Gilliland.

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 approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Hunter added a second, and members agreed by consent.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Citizen Comments were moved to the end of the agenda in order to focus on the Special Presentation. At that time, Sandra Massey, owner of Hope Counseling & Consultation, asked Council to add mental health providers to the list of businesses impacted by COVID which may receive small business loans from ARPA funding. In renovating the former Hardees' building on Monroe Avenue, she has encountered several expenses and additional needs, and she currently is not eligible for grants or governmental funding. She stated the need for mental health is great because of the pandemic, and she currently has a six-month waiting list for clients, adding that she has clients who often travel here from other localities.

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: Work Session on September 7, 2021; Regular Meeting on September 14, 2021; and a Called Joint Meeting with the Planning Commission on September 20, 2021.

REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER

Ms. Onaitis said she had only one update concerning recycling. A regional program has been initiated with the costs to be shared by Covington, Alleghany County, and Clifton Forge. Later she announced that she will be meeting with the Waynesboro Housing Authority at noon on Oct. 19 to discuss voucher options. She invited members to join that meeting in Council Chambers.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

A large crowd was in attendance to hear the Special Presentation made by Lee Downey of Head Down Strategies concerning highlights of the Olde Town Covington Business District Revitalization Plan, with picture boards of the proposed plan displayed around the room. He said the first guiding principle his company employed was to listen to community stakeholders using Appreciative Inquiry via meetings with the Core Team, completing a downtown tour, completing an online survey during the pandemic, and the Community Summit. The created vision statement, "Olde Town Covington is a picturesque Main Street destination where residents, families, and visitors work, live, gather and play in a space built on memories of a vibrant past and grounded in an equitable and sustainable future that embraces today's diverse, modern economy," focuses on a narrative that tells the downtown story while setting six objectives that are realistic, attainable, and sustainable. This vision statement supports all aspects of the downtown physical space, businesses, living spaces, recreation, marketing, and resources for both tourists and residents. Mr. Downey said the cycle of a vibrant downtown must consist of

three parts coming together at the same time: attractions, coupled with marketing and branding, and consumers. The plan suggests having a full-time director to implement strategies; oversee objectives and funding; write reports and government documents; do marketing and branding; and provide assistance for business start-up funds, revolving loans, and "a one-stop shop" for businesses and visitors.

The physical improvement plan included streetscape improvements, opportunity sites for businesses and restaurants, public green space, downtown living, and adding new events and design opportunities. His final recommendation was to apply for a Community Development Block Grant and use ARPA funds for the director position, which will allow the area to become a Main Street Community. He also suggested using ARPA funds to add an Olde Town Business Resource Center; basic improvements to the Gordmans' building; financial resources and incentives for businesses to begin, relocate, or expand; and to support housing. Ms. Onaitis stated that Council had discussed using ARPA funds for the director's position, and that person would also use fifty percent of his or her time focusing on development in outlying areas of the City.

He lauded the joint efforts of the IDA and EDC, noting that expanding businesses downtown leads to growth outside of town. However, it all hinges on the shoulders of citizens to support these businesses. During the audience participation portion, Jeff Johnson, an audience member, suggested that public restroom facilities be developed on the LOVE pocket park downtown in addition to the proposed splash pad and added green space.

#### UNFINISHED/OLD BUSINESS

In consideration of the Special Use Permit for William P. Broughman to allow the use of a garage for minor work on vehicles such as oil and antifreeze changes at 719 N. Pocahontas Avenue, Mayor Sibold stated that members and Mr. Popovich had met and discussed restrictions. Mr. Popovich said operation hours should be limited to part-time Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with minimum types of light duty repairs such as oil changes and battery replacement. Parking is limited to vehicles currently being serviced that must be parked on the property, not on the street or in the alley, and no vehicles may remain on the property longer than 24 hours. Environmental issues must be addressed, with all hazardous materials and chemicals being collected and disposed of as required by law. Mr. Broughman was in attendance, and he agreed to all of the restrictions after Mayor Sibold asked if he consented to them. Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to accept the Special Use Permit, adding that the restrictions must be included, and Mr. Carson seconded. Roll call vote showed a 4-1 decision with the following vote: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: Against. Mr. Tucker explained that he feared this would "open up a can of worms" and that he was accepting the Planning Commission's recommendation to deny the Special Use Permit.

On a motion from Mr. Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker, Council voted unanimously to approve Ordinance O-21-13 to Amend and Reenact Chapter 18, Environment, by Amending and Reenacting Article IV, Vegetation, Division 2, Weeds and Other Noxious Growths: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

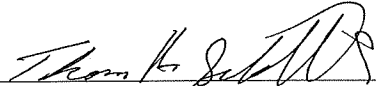
Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to approve R-21-46, a Reappropriations Resolution for the General, Utility, and Grant funds in the amounts of \$16,800.00; \$4,100.00; \$14,527.42; \$15,186.10; \$1,626.86. Mr. Tucker added the second, and the unanimous vote showed Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

Concerning Resolution R-21-47, an Appropriations Resolution for the General Fund (ARPA Funds) for State Compensation Board bonus payments to the Allegheny-Covington Sheriff's Department employees who did not fall under Compensation Board regulations in the amount of \$5,640.00 (26% matching funds for deputies/jailers), Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to approve. Mr. Tucker seconded, and Council approved; Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Sibold said he and Ms. Onaitis had a morning this meeting with Allegheny Foundation officials concerning a grant for the initial phase, the engineering side, of the Downtown Revitalization funds not covered by ARPA. He believes the director's position for Olde Town Covington should be managed by Olde Town Covington Board of Directors and not become a

City position, in order to allow more flexibility. Ms. Onaitis said the City may need to make a grant to Olde Town Covington to fund that position for record-keeping purposes. She asked for a consensus for the amount of ARPA funds that should be designated for downtown, stating that financial advisers gave a \$1.5 million amount for downtown initiatives. Mr. Carson said he wanted a discussion at a later time, and members concurred. With no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned on a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier and seconded by Mr. Tucker.

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

ATTEST:

  
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REBECCA W. SCOTT  
CITY CLERK