

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2021

The regular meeting of the Council for the City of Covington was held on Tuesday, August 10, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. at Council Chambers in City Hall, 333 W. Locust Street, Covington, Virginia.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Thomas H. Sibold, Jr. The invocation was given by Pastor Stephanie Clark, 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 approve the agenda as presented and to add these three items to the agenda:

1. Resolution R-21-39, Resolution approving support agreement for Rail Over River Virginia Brownfields Assistance Fund Grant;
2. R-21-40, Mutual Aid Resolution for Covington/Bath County, building official or zoning administrator services, adapted to read building official;
3. A closed session, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(7), for consultation with legal counsel pertaining to probable litigation where such consultation in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigation posture of the public body regarding an allegation of excessive force. Mr. Tucker seconded, and Council agreed by consensus.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no Citizen Comments.

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 on July 13, 2021; Regular Meeting on July 13, 2021; and Called Meeting on July 22, 2021.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Thomas Ruff, a Traffic Engineer from the Timmons Group, spoke concerning the Route 220 Safety Audit conducted in June. While 31 items were identified that need attention, he focused on three primary needs: sight distance issues; signage and pavement markings with conflicting information; and pedestrian and bike issues. Analysis of accidents in the last five years reveals that rear end collisions, especially involving trucks, occur most frequently at 39 percent. The intersection of Carolton Drive and 220 had the most crashes along the three-mile corridor in the City. Other "hot spots" included intersections at Cherry Street, Kline/Main/ Hickory streets, Carpenter Drive/Route 18, and on Riverside Street near Westrock.

VDOT requires a Road Safety Audit prior to submitting a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant, and Mr. Ruff suggested three intersections need the most improvements: (1) Pine to Beech streets--rebuild the sidewalk, upgrade the existing pedestrian crossing at the Pine Street traffic light, and install a new curb ramp and crosswalk at Beech Street; (2) Cedar Street--reconfigure the pedestrian crossing and retaining wall in front of McAlister Presbyterian Church; (3) Highland Street--Remove the crosswalk connection and build a new sidewalk.

He also suggested applying for a Smart Scale Grant to build bike lanes to connect Riverside Street with the Jackson River Scenic Trail; removing the major asphalt build-up on the intersection at Route 18; making Hickory, Kline, and East Main streets one way; increasing traffic signal timings; revamping pavement markings and signage; and removing vegetation and overgrowth in several areas.

Brian Wright, structural engineer from Timmons, addressed the Rayon Bridge Project, slated to begin construction in the fall of 2024. Preliminary engineering efforts have already begun as the City received a Commonwealth Transportation Board grant for approximately \$14 million in June, with \$12.8 million in construction fees and the remainder in engineering costs.

Mr. Wright also conducted bridge inspections on the Interstate 64 bridges over the Jackson River and South Carpenter Drive and CSX railroad tracks by using "snooper access." Given their age, he stated that both bridges are in good shape, with the one over Carpenter Drive having no expansion joint problems. The one over the river and railroad tracks has some expansion joints that are beginning to corrode but nothing needing immediate consideration. Two culverts were inspected along Carpenter Drive and one on North Allegheny Avenue, and all were in good shape. He will compile a Bridge Repair Inventory that will recommend how to plan for bridge maintenance, using a three-level priority system, but no issues have a priority one level requiring immediate attention.

Gary Johnson, Principal in Charge, addressed the Allegheny Highlands Economic Development Corporation's Business Plan. He recommended the EDC sell the Clifton Forge Business Park site, conduct a site search for a new Greenfield, secure control of Rail Over River and the SLAB site to create a combined vision, and complete design and construction of the pad-ready site at the Commerce Center.

The next presentation was from Ingrid Barber, executive director of the Community Services Board, who addressed the Community Services Board Performance Contract. The 233-page contract, which has been expanded to now cover two years instead of one, focuses on mental health, developmental, and substance use disorder services the CSB provides. Mrs. Barber said mental health services had risen substantially since the Covid pandemic, and her budget, which must be approved by September 30, totals \$8,554,420. Local funding from Covington and Allegheny County amounting to \$268,296 covers 9.43 percent of the total budget, and she was required to file a waiver because local funding did not meet the ten percent required by the state. She anticipates the CSB will receive approximately thirty percent of the opioid settlement, and she plans to use funds to create detoxification services here as numbers are increasing substantially.

She also explained the new drug court process, which is receiving accolades for a successful inception during the pandemic. Fourteen individuals are currently enrolled; they will serve no time provided they meet weekly with the judge and participating in counseling services 2-3 times weekly, as well as completing random drug testing weekly. Funds are also provided for job services, training, education, and housing costs. She expressed concern over the closing of five state hospitals two weeks ago due to safety violations and staffing shortage. CSB staff was forced to do many private placements, and an average of 44+ individuals being left weekly in emergency rooms due to lack of placements.

REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER

1. Maple Avenue Streetscape: Phase 2 is 95 percent complete, she estimates, and within two weeks, trees and bulbs will be planted. The entire project must be closed by December 31 and is currently 175 days past schedule. Phase 3 will be overseen by Hurt and Proffitt, with VDOT funds providing \$1 million and the city providing \$870,000. Mayor Sibold asked that the contractors finish the concrete in the alleyway beside the Discovery Center and the gate and fence be replaced, if possible. He suggested the area could be turned into a pocket park.
2. Geographic Information Services: Hurt and Proffitt will also provide GIS and will work with city employees, the Commissioner of Revenue, and a staff member from the Treasurer's office to transition services and ensure what data is needed for 9-1-1 efforts and data clean-up.
3. Paving: The schedule for 2022 will be completed by Bob Howard, assistant director of Public Works, and the new Public Works Director, Patrick Madigan. They will focus on mill and overlay and slurry seal, trying to tie in local streets as well as major thoroughfares.
4. American Relief Plan: The City is required to hold a public hearing prior to the reporting period, and she is awaiting guidance from the federal government for the official reporting period. She anticipates the hearing will be between the end of August and October.

5. Property Maintenance: She and Mr. Popovich have sent a letter to the owner of the property owner at 411 N. Alleghany Avenue and are trying to find a solution to the derelict property.

UNFINISHED/OLD BUSINESS

On a motion from Mr. Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker, Council voted unanimously to approve Resolution R-21-33 Concerning a Proposed Memorandum of Understanding between Localities and the State of Virginia on Allocation of Opioid Settlement Funds: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

For Resolution R-21-35 to Donate City-owned Personal Property to the Clifton Forge Shrine Club, Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to approve giving the former Farmers' Market trailer to the club. Mr. Tucker added the second, and members agreed by consensus. Shrine Club members Mickey Bowyer, Ray Keen, and Mike Henderson were in the audience and gratefully acknowledged the City's donation, with Mr. Bowyer calling it "Christmas for the Shriners." Mr. Keen presented a plaque of appreciation to Mayor Sibold, with another to be given to the Farmers' Market.

Concerning Appropriations Resolution R-21-36 for DARE Contributions to the Covington Police Department, Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Hunter, and Council agreed by consensus.

Members voted unanimously to pass Reappropriations Resolution R-21-37 for the General Fund, Utility Fund, Landfill Fund, and Project Funds. Ms. Onaitis said these were carryover funds from 2021 due to internal cost controls due to the pandemic. The motion was made by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Hunter, with this vote: 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 Resolution R-21-38 for the Alleghany-Covington Consolidated School Funding Agreement. Mr. Hunter seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

Resolution R-21-39, added at the beginning of the meeting as a support agreement for Rail Over River Virginia Brownfields Assistance Fund Grant, was approved unanimously on a motion by Vice Mayor Crosier and a second by Mr. Tucker with this vote: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

The last Resolution added, R-21-40, a Mutual Aid Resolution for Covington/Bath County, building official services, was approved 5-0 on a motion by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

NEW BUSINESS

Concerning the Community Services Board Performance Contract, Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to accept it, and Mr. Carson seconded. The vote was 5-0: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

Covington School Board member Tamala Preston submitted a letter of resignation due to moving out of the City, which was accepted by the School Board on August 9. Mayor Sibold commended Mrs. Preston for her service and asked City Attorney Mark Popovich if the time frame allowed Council to fill her unexpired term in the September meetings. Mr. Popovich stated that a public hearing must be advertised at least ten days before the September 7 meeting. Mayor Sibold polled members and received consensus to holding the public hearing and interviewing process at the Work Session on September 7, with the appointment to be made on September 14.

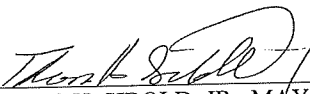
Mr. Hunter asked Ms. Onaitis to determine if something could be done about potholes in the alley between Pine and Oak streets behind Pine Street Baptist Church.

Mayor Sibold said he would like a resolution for September as Suicide Awareness Month, and he anticipated Clifton Forge and Alleghany County would do the same.

Vice Mayor Crosier made a motion to enter into closed session, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(7), for consultation with legal counsel pertaining to probable litigation where such consultation in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigation posture of the public body regarding an allegation of excessive force. Mr. Tucker added a second, and members consented.

Following the closed session, Council reconvened and voted by consensus on a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker, to certify that only the matter stated was discussed.

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