

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 10, 2022

The regular meeting of the Council for the City of Covington was held on Tuesday, May 10, 2022 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 Rev. Pete Moore, 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. Carson, Jr., Councilman Raymond C. Hunter, and Councilman S. Allan Tucker.

City Manager: Krystal Onaitis

City Attorney: Mark Popovich

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There was discussion to add to the agenda: Proclamations for: National Police Week May 11–17, 2022; National Public Works Week May 15–21, 2022; National EMS Week - May 15 - 21, 2022; National Firefighter Appreciation in May 2022. To appoint a new City Clerk. To add resolution R-22-15, for Capital Outlay Fire Department Utility. To add Kyle Moore to the agenda. Motion was made by Mr. Tucker and seconded by Mr. Hunter to add items to the current agenda, all members agreed by consent.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Darrell Crawford asked how many City ordinances are on the books and who has read them. Ms. Onaitis stated that the Code Enforcement Officer will review the ordinances in his job duties. The ordinance are approved by Council and departments follow them. Mr. Crawford mentioned a chicken ordinance a few years ago. Mr. Onaitis stated that the Code Enforcement Officer follows up on animal issues.

CORRECTION AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker, Council consented to approve the following minutes as presented: Work Session on April 5, 2022; and the Regular Meeting on April 12, 2022.

APPOINTMENTS

Council interviewed six candidates for the Alleghany Highlands School Board on May 3, 2022. Those candidates were: Jonathan Arritt, Tammy Scruggs-Duncan, Marie Fitzpatrick, Karen Kessinger, Mike Wickline, and Jay Woodson. There were three openings to fill. The Mayor stated that all candidates did very well and it makes it that much harder for Council to select. He thanked them all for their interest in being on the school board.

Individual votes were cast as follows:

Mayor Sibold: Marie Fitzpatrick, Mike Wickline and Jay Woodson

Vice Mayor Crosier: Jonathan Arritt, Tammy Scruggs-Duncan and Mike Wickline

Mr. Carson: Jonathan Arritt, Tammy Scruggs-Duncan and Marie Fitzpatrick

Mr. Hunter: Jonathan Arritt, Tammy Scruggs-Duncan and Marie Fitzpatrick

Mr. Tucker: Jonathan Arritt, Tammy Scruggs-Duncan and Marie Fitzpatrick

A member of the audience drew two of the terms, from a box, and Jonathan Arritt drew his term. The terms selected were:

Jonathan Arritt: 4 year term

Tammy Scruggs-Duncan: 3 year term

Marie Fitzpatrick: 2 year term

Mayor Sibold thanked and congratulated the three candidates that were selected.

Councilman Tucker spoke about the interviews for a new City Clerk. There were several applications, one candidate had taken a full time position elsewhere. On a motion by Councilman Tucker, seconded by Mr. Hunter to hire Kyla Crosier as City Clerk. The vote showed: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: Abstain; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

PUBLIC HEARING

The public hearing was opened by Mayor Sibold to receive citizen input in reference to proposed issuance of bonds for capital improvements to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), \$8,500,000. Ms. Onaitis stated that this project is legally required by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). This is due to overflow after hard rain events. The upcoming fee for having an overflow event would be approximately \$64,000 per day per occurrence. There is \$1.7 million in forgiveness loan from VRA-Virginia Resources Authority and loan is 0% interest.

Mike Wickline of W. Phillips Street stated that he knows that the project has to be done. However, there are other large projects like the Rayon Bridge. The \$8.5 million project for the WWTP will hit tax payers. When the City looks at doing cuts, City services, there also needs to be a review of projects that are not necessary, such as the downtown project. Only 65% pay taxes downtown due to those that are not required to pay taxes, such as the courthouse and many churches. The citizens are getting strapped for money and when the recession hits the City will want to raise taxes.

Mr. Crawford stated that thankfully the City does not have water meters. He continued that the City has approximately 5500 residents to pay off \$53 million, which is a lot of money. There was an article in the local newspaper that there was stimulus money, that it seemed there was so much that the City did not know what to do with it all, he would like to know where it is now. He asked if there was a guarantee that all the \$8.5 million would go toward paying for the sewer project. Mayor Sibold replied that it can only go towards that project.

With no other citizen comments, Mayor Sibold closed the Public Hearing.

REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER

Ms. Onaitis reported in reference to the WWTP plant upgrade that the state DEQ requires this project completed or there will be fines to the City. There will be a project manager on site for \$208,000, administrative and legal fees for closing \$57,000. After May 14, 2022 DEQ will require that materials used are made in the U.S., which will increase prices. There cannot be an increase in tax rates to pay for this project.

In reference to the joint pad-ready site in Low Moor with the City and Alleghany County, they are waiting on environmental permits from DEQ. There was a very productive meeting last week on this project with DEQ.

The Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation (AHEDC) is working on a "FamTour" with VEDP-Virginia Economic Development Partnership for June. This project will give more information to citizens of what they are accomplishing in the community and what is available.

The Industrial Development Authority-IDA owns the former Gordman's building on Main Street. The IDA can keep up with maintenance of the building with a grant from the Alleghany Foundation. Ms. Onaitis meet with Mr. Bostic, Developer in the area. He has several potential uses for the building.

There will be work on the Thacker Street sidewalk near Walmart using in-house staff, when weather permits. There were tons of spring cleanup debris taken to the landfill. The two weeks of cleanup for staff and fuel was \$14,125. The staff along with assistance from the Fire department, did a great job on this needed cleanup.

The street sweeper will be used on city streets eight hours a week. There is a required CDL license to operate the sweeper. The City has one operator and one in training.

The City will work with private utility companies, such as: Columbia Gas and Dominion Energy on the language in agreements for coordinating work in the City. This will aid in any needed repairs after their work on sidewalks/streets. There have been pothole patching with more to

follow. There has been camera work on lines completed. Mallow sewer shed is scheduled to have camera/inspection by May 27 to investigate claims of collapsed pipe.

Ms. Onaitis gave a visional follow up of the street PCI – Pavement Condition Index. There are 3.1 miles in the rating study that need repairs, it would cost \$964,101. The City’s budget for a year is approximately \$175,000. The study is complied with the Army Corp of Engineers and VDOT. The poor ratings are 40 and below. There are no more funds in this budget for street paving. The ADA requires, at the intersections, a ramp or upgrade be made, this increases the cost of a paving project.

UNFINISHED/OLD BUSINESS

Cathy Kimberlin, Commissioner of Revenue, gave the list of those that had sent in bids for the 2023 General Reassessment of Real Property, their bids were:

Pearson’s Appraisal Services \$119,922
Cowan Services, LLC \$125,373
Wampler Eanes Appraisal Group, LTD. \$126,736

Pearson’s and Wampler Appraisal companies have done the reassessments for the City in the past. Cowan is newly formed and have not completed a governmental reassessment.

Vice Mayor Crosier asked when looking at Pearson’s and Wampler, what is their process for reassessment. Ms. Kimberlin stated that they go by: a sales study (which they supply later), talk to realtors and look at property and measure any new additions, take photos and review building permits. Homes at this time are selling for more than they are accessed.

Motion was made by Vice Mayor Crosier for hiring Pearson Appraisal for 2023 General Reassessment of Real Property and seconded by Mr. Carson. The vote showed: Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

On a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker, Council voted unanimously to approve Resolution R-22-12, Shop with a Cop, donation, \$50; vote showed Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

On a motion from Vice Crosier, seconded by Mr. Tucker voted unanimously to approve Resolution R-22-13 issuance of bonds for capital improvements to the Wastewater Treatment Plant, \$8,500,000. The vote showed Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

Council read the Proclamation for ‘Ogilvie and Fallen Officer Day’. On a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Hunter voted unanimously to approve Resolution R-22-14 to set March 14th as ‘Ogilvie and Fallen Officer Day’ with a proclamation annually. The vote showed Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

On a motion from Vice Mayor Crosier, seconded by Mr. Carson voted unanimously to approve Resolution R-22-15 for Capital Outlay Fire Department Utility Vehicle, \$555,000. The vote showed Mayor Sibold: For; Vice Mayor Crosier: For; Mr. Carson: For; Mr. Hunter: For; and Mr. Tucker: For.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilman Carson asked that the City look at full replacement cost insurance due to the City losing a fire truck recently on I-64 when it was rear-ended by another vehicle and totaled. This was a 1997 model and the insurance will be reviewed for vehicles that are 10 years and newer. The Fire Chief, Andrew Baker, has reviewed several options and cost for a replacement truck. There will be 6-9 months for a delivery of the truck. The equipment needed will be on the truck.

Council members read the proclamations for: National Public Works Week; National EMS Week; National Firefighter Appreciation. National Police Week May 11–17, 2022; National

Public Works Week May 15–21, 2022; National EMS Week - May 15 - 21, 2022; National Firefighter Appreciation May 2022.

Mayor Sibold congratulated Kyle Moore for being appointed as Chaplin for the Virginia State Police. Mr. Moore thanked him as he was honored to have been chosen. Mr. Moore had asked Council to speak at the meeting. He has heard many citizens talk about the recent tax bills that they are receiving. He assured that he was not there to pick a fight, that he will pay his taxes. He continued that he believed that an approximate 29% increase is an excessive amount, especially due to the rise in inflation. The Commissioner of Revenue gave the Council options and Council choose to leave it like it was knowing of the increase to citizens. He is blessed to be able to pay taxes. However, the elderly in the area are on fixed incomes, they need a vehicle to get to doctor appointments, get groceries, etc... If citizens had been given a plan and made aware of the increase it may have been a different outcome. He asked Council to please revisit this issue, the citizens deserve a plan. His taxes are approximately \$1500 more and he does not live an extravagant life. He thanked Council for listening.

Mr. Hunter spoke about the possibility of a community garden on Pine Street.

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

ATTEST:

REBECCA BRATTON NUCKOLS
INTERIM CITY CLERK