

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
September 10, 2024**

Council for the City of Covington held a regular meeting on Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 333 W. Locust Street, Covington, Virginia.

Mayor Thomas H. Sibold, Jr. called the meeting to order with the following members present: Mayor Sibold; Vice Mayor David S. Crosier; Councilman William (Lance) Carson, Jr.; Councilman Fred F. Forbes; Councilman Raymond C. Hunter. Also present were City Manager Allen Dressler and City Attorney Mark Popovich.

There was a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Crosier motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Hunter. All members were in favor with "aye" votes.

Public Hearing

Mr. Sibold opened the Public Hearing pursuant to Section 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia (1950, as amended) to consider Covington City Code by Amending and reenacting the recommendation of Planning Commission, for the proposals rezoning request of Alleghany Highlands Community Service Board from R-3 to C-2. The lots are described as 14---146---6-and 14---146---7-, located directly beside 313 N Monroe Avenue.

Eric Tyree, Building & Zoning Official, spoke that the zoning request from the Alleghany Highlands Community Service Board has conditions and would not allow, for example, a restaurant or bar. The Planning Commission has approved the rezoning request and it is being taken before City Council for review and vote.

Mayor Sibold spoke about C-2 zoning being for medical clinic type services and they are wanting to expand to use as office and meeting spaces.

Mr. Tyree stated they have owned this space for 17 years and want to use it.

Mr. Crosier stated that this would not be for overnight use. Mr. Tyree confirmed that it would not be.

Ingrid Barber, Executive Director of the CSB-Alleghany Highlands Community Service Board, spoke that they the CSB had applied for a \$1M opioid grant and could use the money to renovate these lots and have 17-25 offices, training room and psychiatric services. They have assisted over 4500 for mental/health disorders. There would not be any overnight stays. If grant funds are not used, the money would be required to be returned. This is a projected \$2.4M expansion. There was discussion that there are currently 2-3 employees in one office. The expansion would not add more staff.

Bob McCallister of E. Fudge Street and on the CSB Board, stated that the expansion would be great and will assist patients. He would appreciate if Council would be in favor of this project.

Debbie Stayton of E. Fudge Street stated that this is basically in her back yard. Her concerns are when patients are waiting for the doors to CSB to open there are many that congregate. She also is concerned about what the CSB will be doing long term in the second project.

Lee Ann Osborne of E. Fudge Street, spoke about her concerns that there would be increased traffic down the alley and 15 more parking spaces seemed excessive. There are 8 exterior doors and without lighting or cameras this could be dangerous. There is a designated smoking area where patients congregate.

Cherrie Martin of Pine Street voiced her concerns that changing the zoning would cause construction noise, more traffic and safety concerns for neighbors. The notice that she received from the Planning Commission had 4:30 pm, it had been changed to 4:00 pm without receiving another notice. The statements that she heard, from the already started meeting, from Ms. Barber were vague. It seems that the CSB is attempting to take over the neighborhood. She asked why they couldn't move to downtown or to the former Kroger building where it is not a residential area and the zoning would be already in place. Ms. Martin thanked Council for allowing her to speak.

Paulette Lewis of E. Pine Street, stated that this is a residential area where kids play, elderly live and safety has not been addressed. She was not notified of the Planning Commission's meeting.

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
September 10, 2024

Robin Sweeney of Dolly Ann Avenue and Vice Chair of the CSB is in favor of the rezoning. They have medical conference meetings via the internet. She mentioned that everyone in attendance have relatives or friends that have needed this service. CSB has worked with youth as young as pre-school age. Ms. Sweeney is a lifelong resident of Covington. She strongly anticipates that this rezoning will be approved and this would help the community.

Ms. Barber stated that there are 8 cameras around the exterior of the current building and more cameras inside the building including corridors. Cameras are not allowed in therapy rooms. The Covington Police Department has worked closely with the CSB over the years and are on site in one minute if needed. The cameras record and can zoom in. Several exterior doors are needed for safety in case of a fire for all to escape. When it gets dark early in the winter, patients and staff leave from the front of the building. There is lighting all around the building.

Mr. Tyree stated that with an expansion, egress would need to be approved before a building permit is approved. Also lighting on buildings are required to be 'down lights' so that it would not go into a neighboring home.

Ms. Barber stated that not everyone has a vehicle, therefore many walk to CSB or ride the RADAR bus. The rezoning request is for Project 1. CSB is looking at another site for Project 2. The rezoning request does not have overnight stays. When she came to CSB there were only a few services, she hopes that when she is gone that the 35 services are still provided.

Mr. Carson asked about the current hours. Ms. Barber stated hours are 9 am – 5 pm and there have been requests for evening hours. IOP-Intense Out Patient services are 3 days a week, 3 hours a day in groups, with breaks, for 12-16 weeks.

Mr. Crosier has concerns after all that was mentioned at the meeting and that this involves a grant.

Ms. Barber advised that the grant will not allow for a new build, only renovations to expand. Patients are citizens of Covington and Alleghany Highlands. Rockbridge serves Bath County. Some patients are same day access without appointment, they do not turn anyone away. Rarely is a patient from out of the area.

Greg Rice of E. Oak Street, mentioned that people were brought here to a local hotel and had child molestation crime convictions, etc... he asked if patients are checked.

Ms. Barber stated that they are not checked because it is a violation of their rights. Many CSB do not have the 35 services that this area offers. Same day intake could be for psychiatric care, early intervention, women services, high blood pressure checks, diabetes, veterans with distress disorders, etc... The home across from the library has been there for many years. These citizens cannot work and have nowhere else to go. This service has never been a problem. Ms. Barber was asked about the cameras and someone sleeping in front of the CSB. Ms. Barber stated that the cameras record and there would have to be new staff for the cameras to be monitored at all times. Ms. Barber was asked about the pharmacy at CSB, she stated they do not have one on site because it became very costly. The prescriptions are sent to the drug store that the patient uses. The crisis services that are offered assist so that the ER is not a requirement in most cases. If a wellbeing check is needed for someone in a home the Police Department is called.

Mr. Sibold mentioned that people are not taken to the Knights Court motel any more, after getting out of prison.

Stephanie Clark, of Alleghany Avenue and on the CSB board stated she is a case manager as an employee of TAP-Total Action for Progress. TAP assists those getting out of jail and puts them in a hotel. She has asked many patients about going back home with family and they do not want to go back, they like to live in the Covington area and work here.

Ms. Barber suggested that Council be given a tour of the proposed rezoning area.

Beverly Twitty of Covington stated that the CSB does good work. She is concerned that Council will be hearing the amount of grant that would be sent back.

Mayor Sibold thanked everyone for speaking and stated that this rezoning request would be considered later in the meeting. He closed the Public Hearing.

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
September 10, 2024**

Citizen Comments

Ms. Corey Bowles stated that she is interested in being on the Social Services board. Information has been e-mailed to Council of her interest. She thanked Council for their time and consideration.

Andrew Baker, Covington Volunteer Fire Chief, spoke about the City's vehicle fleet aging. Two of the fire trucks are 1992 and 1995 and they have continuous repair problems. The aerial ladder is a 2005; support truck is a 1997; Freightliner is a 1998. The truck on I-64 on a call was totaled by another truck, it did not have replacement cost and that is a gamble with insurance. There was research in 2018 for a fire truck, it was around \$630,000, it was not purchased and now it is \$900,000. The City could work together and talk to the County, they are looking to purchase equipment soon. Recently they were on a fire call and the truck stalled, they were able to fix it quickly, however these are the issues they are up against with repairs. The safety of volunteers and citizens are very important. Mr. Baker thanked Allen Dressler, David Bryant and Chris Smith for working with the fire department in serving Covington and areas of Allegheny County. Mr. Sibold thanked Mr. Baker for being at the meeting and speaking.

Minutes

Mr. Crosier motioned to approve the following minutes, seconded by Mr. Hunter:

Regular Meeting August 13, 2024.

All members were in favor with "aye" votes.

Recognitions by Director of Public Safety

Chris Smith, Covington Chief of Police/Director of Public Safety stated that he wanted to recognize the wonderful job that dispatchers, fire, rescue and police do each day. Specifically on December 8, 2023 there was a call that came into the dispatch center that a man was having a heart attack. This was very unusual as he was hunting in the Overlook area where there are only logging roads. The EMS/Paramedics walked in, found the other hunter that was with him and they walked to get to the patient to stabilize him. The Fire Chief and other volunteers arrived on scene and carried the patient down the logging road and was taken to the landing zone to be airlifted. Chief Smith appreciates all the team work and believes that the patient is doing well thanks to the team to get him medical attention.....

Report of City Manager

Mr. Dressler thanked Council and everyone for attending the meeting and being interested in local government.

The Way Finding Sign Program with the Allegheny Highlands Chamber of Commerce are finalized. Signs will be going up in the community.

Mr. Dressler thanked Mr. Baker and appreciates all fire, rescue and police staff and all that they do. In the past budgets the City has been putting aside funds for a fire truck. Mr. Dressler and David Bryant, Finance Director, meet with VML/VACO..... last week in reference to an equipment list that is needed for the City, this includes the additional funds needed for a fire truck. Mr. Dressler noted he can be contacted best by phone.

The committee for The Wall That Heals event are prepared for this event Oct. 3-6, 2024.

There have been bids received for paving. The Jackson River Sport Complex paving has been in bad shape with citizens and visitors using the complex. It is on schedule to get paved.

There will be a new event on October 12, at the Sport Complex. This will be 'Farm Fest In Our Tiny Town'. There will be old tractors, animals, food, kids activities and music.

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
September 10, 2024

This coming Friday will be Cougar Football Friday night.

There will be more holiday lights added to the Jackson River Sport Complex light show this year. We thank all who contributed to this event, including Olde Town Covington.....

Appointments

Mr. Crosier motioned to nominate Charles W. Smith, Jr. to the Planning Commission board. Seconded by Mr. Carson. Mr. Smith's term will expire September 30, 2028. The motion was seconded by Mr. Carson.

There was discussion that there is a Social Services board appointment opening, as Greg Martin has resigned. This term expires July 31, 2026. There was a motion by Mr. Crosier to table this appointment until next month, as this would be advertised.

Ordinances and Resolutions

There was a motion by Mr. Crosier and seconded by Mr. Hunter to table the Ordinance O-24-07 Amending and reenacting the recommendation of Planning Commission, for the proposals rezoning request of Alleghany Highlands Community Service Board from R-3 to C-2. The lots are described as 14---146---6-and 14---146---7-, located directly beside 313 N Monroe Avenue. All members were in favor with 'aye' votes.

Ms. Barber was asked to get the time line that the CSB has in case the opioid grant funds would need to be returned.

Mr. Sibold mentioned a public meeting may need to be held for working together on this rezoning request from CSB.

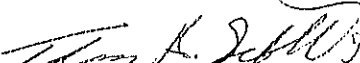
Ms. Barber was asked about a walkthrough of the proposed project and she stated it would need to be after 5 p.m. Mr. Dressler mentioned that if there would be a meeting it would be a Called Meeting of Council.

Mr. Crosier motioned to approve the following resolutions, seconded by Mr. Hunter.

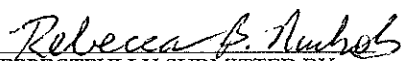
- 1) Resolution R-24-22 Opioid Settlement Recoveries
- 2) Resolution R-24-23 Schools Capital Improvements
- 3) Resolution R-24-24 Re-appropriations from FY24 to FY25
- 4) Resolution R-24-25 Appropriation EQ Basin Project Payment (*Auditors suggestion to account for this payment paid in June 2024 or auditors will have to account for it as a pre-payment for the next 30 years*)

The roll call votes were as follows: Mr. Carson, for; Mr. Forbes, for; Mr. Hunter, for; Vice Mayor Crosier, for; Mayor Sibold, for.

With no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned by consensus.


THOMAS H. SIBOLD, JR., MAYOR

ATTEST:


RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY
REBECCA BRATTON NUCKOLS
ACTING CITY CLERK