

**CITY OF COVINGTON  
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 14, 2017**

**Council President O'Keefe** called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Roll call was as follows:

PRESENT: John Callahan, Jerry Coner, Mark Wright, Larry Rolling, Rick Smith,  
Patrick McMath and Sam O'Keefe

ABSENT: None.

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mrs. Alisa Faciane.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

**Councilman Wright made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilman Rolling. Roll call was unanimous to adopt the consent calendar. The consent calendar was adopted.**

**REGULAR AGENDA**

**Unfinished Business**

**Items to be voted on:**

**1. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2017-08-06** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Following Provisions of the Covington Code of Ordinances: Chapter 18 Buildings and Building Regulations, Article IV. Fill Regulations (Wright)

**Councilman Wright** led a discussion on Item No. 2017-08-06.

**Councilman Smith made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilman McMath. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.**

**Councilman Wright made a motion to adopt Item No. 2017-08-06, seconded by Councilman Rolling. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2017-08-06. Item No. 2017-08-06 was adopted.**

**2. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2017-09-01** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Adopting the 2018 Operating Budget and the Five Year Capital Outlay Budget for the Years 2018-2022 for the City of Covington (O'Keefe)

**Council President O'Keefe** led a discussion on Item No. 2017-09-01.

Mrs. Candace Watkins discussed her recent correspondence addressed to the City Council and Mayor in which she requested that the City refrain from committing

\$400,000 to the renovation of the old firehouse until a study of the old courthouse and discussions with parish officials, can be conducted.

**Mayor Cooper** commented that he along with some of the Councilman have replied to Mrs. Watkins' correspondence. He pointed out that discussions have been underway for over three years on the firehouse project and a feasibility study has been conducted. Plans are almost complete on the project and it has received Historic District Commission approval. With the approval of the budget this evening, the project should be put out to bid early next year. Also, he stated this project has no affect on the City's efforts toward determining the use of the old courthouse building. Funds have been set aside in the fund balance and may be allocated should the need arise next year for further assessment on the feasibility of the old courthouse building.

**Councilman Smith** commented that the old firehouse is an eyesore and feels the City is moving forward in the right direction. He suggested that the City address the old courthouse building if and when it becomes available.

**Councilman Rolling** thanked Mrs. Watkins for her comments. He stated that the Council and Administration have been discussing the old firehouse for several years and feels the City should restore the building. Also, he commented that the City is aware of the potential sale of the old courthouse and will assess the situation at the appropriate time.

**Councilman McMath** thanked Mrs. Watkins for appearing at the meeting tonight. He commented that the situation with the old courthouse is fluid and the City will continue to monitor and discuss its future. Also, he mentioned the City is planning to form a committee comprised of residents and business leaders who have an interest in Downtown Covington along with City Council members to make a recommendation as to the best use for the old courthouse building if it becomes available. Also, he commented since the old firehouse is an historic building, its renovation would be another step in the continued development of Downtown Covington and he looks forward to future events in the building after its renovation.

**Councilman Coner** stated that the old firehouse is in his district and he supports expending the funds to renovate the building.

**Councilman Coner** made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by **Councilman Callahan**. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.

**Councilman Wright** made a motion to amend and adopt Item No. 2017-09-01 as reflected in the November 2 and 3, 2017 printouts, seconded by **Councilman Coner**. Roll call was unanimous to amend and adopt Item No. 2017-09-01 as reflected in the November 2 and 3, 2017 printouts. Item No. 2017-09-01 was amended and adopted as reflected in the November 2 and 3, 2017 printouts.

**3. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2017-09-02 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Setting the Compensation for the Mayor of the City of Covington for the Year 2018 (O'Keefe)**

**Council President O'Keefe** led a discussion on Item No. 2017-09-02.

**Councilman Callahan** made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by **Councilman Wright**. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.

**Councilman Coner** made a motion to amend and adopt Item No. 2017-09-02 as follows:

Page 1, line 23, shall read, "Annual salary of \$88,890 representing a 2% increase..."

Seconded by **Councilman McMath**. Roll call was unanimous to amend and adopt Item No. 2017-09-02 as set out above. Item No. 2017-09-02 was amended and adopted as set out above.

**4. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2017-09-03** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Official Zoning Map of the City of Covington, Louisiana, to Reclassify Four (4) Lots Located in Square 35, Connely Addition, which Property is Located Between West 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue, West 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue and North Florida Street in Covington, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, from CN (Neighborhood Commercial) to a Planned Commercial Use Overlay District (PCD) with a Base Zoning of CR (Regional Commercial) (Zoning Case No. 17-08-02Rezoning/PCD) (Coner)

**Council President O'Keefe** led a discussion on Item No. 2017-09-03.

**Councilman Wright** made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by **Councilman Coner**. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.

**Councilman Coner** made a motion to adopt Item No. 2017-09-03, seconded by **Councilman Rolling**. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2017-09-03. Item No. 2017-09-03 was adopted.

**5. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2017-10-01** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Authorizing the Mayor to Execute a Lease Agreement between the City of Covington and CLECO Power LLC (Smith)

**Council President O'Keefe** led a discussion on Item No. 2017-10-01.

**Councilman Coner** made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by **Councilman Callahan**. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.

**Councilman Smith** made a motion to adopt Item No. 2017-10-01, seconded by **Councilman Rolling**. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2017-10-01. Item No. 2017-10-01 was adopted.

## **B. New Business**

### **Items to be voted on:**

1. **RESOLUTION NO. 2017-23** – A Resolution of the City of Covington in Support of the Jefferson Avenue Trail Project as Selected to be Included in the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and Acknowledgment of the Authority of the Mayor to Execute All Documents Associated Therewith (O'Keefe)

**Council President O'Keefe** led a discussion on Resolution No. 2017-23.

**Mayor Cooper** stated that the City received a Transportation Alternatives Program grant in the amount of \$958,238.40 for the construction of a ten-foot wide concrete shared-use trail in the public right-of-way from Theard Street and East 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue, along East 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Jefferson Avenue and down the west side of Jefferson Avenue to West 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue. The purpose of the trail is to increase pedestrian and bicycle movement in Downtown Covington. Also, he pointed out that the City will be responsible for the required local match of 20% of the grant award in addition to the engineering fees. Also, he recognized City Grants Administrator Kelli Moore and City Engineer Daniel Hill for their work on the application for this grant award.

**Councilman Wright** made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2017-23, seconded by **Councilman Coner**. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2017-23. Resolution No. 2017-23 was adopted.

### **Items to be discussed:**

1. **2018 Council meeting schedule (O'Keefe)**

**Council President O'Keefe** discussed the 2018 Council meeting schedule. Also, he pointed out that the meeting schedule may be revised depending on the workload.

## **COMMENTS AND REPORTS**

### **Council District and Committee Reports**

1. **District A –**

**Councilman Callahan** invited everyone to the Thanksgiving luncheon sponsored by the Bridging the Gap Ministry which will be held on November 20<sup>th</sup> at 2 P.M. in the Bogue Falaya Hall.

2. **District B –**

**Councilman Coner** gave honor to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Also, he recognized the November birthdays for City employees. Also, he reminded everyone to vote on Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup> to elect the State Treasurer and District #77 State Representative. Also, he reminded everyone to shop locally to support our local businesses. Also, he mentioned that our prayers go out to the victims and family members in the tragedy in Sutherland Springs, Texas and asked everyone to pray for our country. His quote for this evening was, "The first to apologize is the bravest, the first to forgive is the strongest, and the first to forget is the happiest."

3. **District C –**

**Councilman Wright** commented that the River Forest neighborhood is grateful for the beginning of the new project on Lurline Drive and the continued efforts to

restructure the drainage and streets. Also, he extended congratulations from the District C residents to the local football teams for qualifying for the playoffs.

**4. District D –**

**Councilman Rolling** announced that there were six new occupational licenses issued in October and November and encouraged the public to shop locally to support our local businesses. He mentioned that the Three Rivers Art Festival was held last weekend and was a huge success. He commended the City for its new campaign to encourage visitors to stay, shop and dine in our city and pointed out the new pole banners along Boston Street. Upcoming events: Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup> – OnStage presents, “A Rocky Mountain High Christmas – A John Denver Music Tribute” at 7 P.M. in the Fuhrmann Auditorium; November 24<sup>th</sup>-December 20<sup>th</sup> – Christmas in the Country in Downtown Covington; December 3<sup>rd</sup>-December 9<sup>th</sup> – Artist Week on Lee Lane; December 3<sup>rd</sup> – Children’s Holiday Tea Party at the English Tea Room; Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> – Deck the Rails children’s event from 10 A.M. until noon at the Trailhead; Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup> – History and Holly Home Tour sponsored by the Covington Heritage Foundation; Thursday, December 14<sup>th</sup> – Caroling at the Trailhead at 7 P.M.; Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>-Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> – Ice skating at the Covington Recreation Complex; and the Farmer’s Market every Wednesday and Saturday. Also, he wished everyone a blessed and happy Thanksgiving holiday.

**5. District E –**

**Councilman Smith** commended the Mayor and Administration for the terrific job throughout the budget process. Also, he extended kudos to Kelli Moore for her work on the Jefferson Avenue Trail grant application. He mentioned there have been some property issues in District E recently but he was able to work with the Code Enforcement Department and all the issues have been resolved. Also, he wished everyone a blessed and happy Thanksgiving.

**6. At Large (Vice President) –**

**Councilman McMath** remarked that this was his first experience going through the budget process and commended the Mayor and Administration for their work throughout the process. Also, he mentioned that the 2018 budget contains approximately \$12 million allocated to the proposed capital improvement plan and pointed out that the constant upgrades to infrastructure, roads and drainage will be accomplished without raising taxes on the residents of the City of Covington. Also, he wished everyone Happy Thanksgiving.

**7. At Large (President) –**

**Council President O’Keefe** extended his appreciation to the Mayor, Administration and all City departments for their work for the City of Covington. Also, he mentioned that he would like to meet with Police Chief Lentz to discuss the security at City Hall.

**B. Administrative Comments and Reports**

**1. Mayor Cooper’s comments:**

- (a) He thanked the City Council, Chief Administrative Officer Gina Hayes, Director of Finance Alisa Faciane and all department heads for their work throughout the 2018 budget process.
- (b) He gave an update on some current projects:
  - (1) Covington Community Trail, Phase 1 – This project is another link in the six-foot wide sidewalk for jogging and walking on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Tyler Street and Hubie Gallagher Park. The project is basically complete with the exception of the final punchlist and walk through.

(2) 2016 Sidewalk Construction and Repair Project – The contractor is currently repairing some of the sidewalks on South Jahncke Avenue between 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The project will move to downtown where work will begin on some of the handicap ramps and street striping. Task Order No. 2 will be issued later this week and will include sidewalks in the North Florida Street/West 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue areas.

(3) East 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Sewer Lift Station – The contractor has basically completed the work and is currently addressing punchlist items. The project should be completed by next week.

(4) East 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue Sewer Lift Station – This is a conversion of an older lift station from above ground pumps to submersible pumps. Gottfried Contractors was awarded the project. Contract and material submittals are currently underway and construction is expected to start before the end of the year.

(5) River Forest Paving and Drainage – This project includes the section of Lurline Drive between West 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Karen Drive. The project is underway and the subcontractor is working on the drainage and relocation of minor waterlines. Once the drainage is complete, the concrete will be replaced from West 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue to the intersection with Karen Drive. He suggested that residents use West 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue or Willow Drive for ingress and egress during this roadwork. The project should be substantially complete in 90 calendar days, pending weather.

(6) West 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge at Mile Branch Rehabilitation – The project was awarded to Stranco and preliminary matters are underway. Construction should start before the end of the year.

(c) He recapped some recent events:

(1) The first Falaya Fest to showcase local musical talent was held recently in the Bogue Falaya Park and according to the organizers, it was a successful event.

(2) He acknowledged the recent Three Rivers Art Festival for its tremendous success and recognized its organizers led by Sarada Bonnett along with the volunteers and sponsors.

(d) He reminded everyone about the local high school football playoff games on Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup> between Covington High and Ouachita Parish; St. Paul's and John Curtis; and Archbishop Hannan and De La Salle. He wished all the local teams success in the playoffs.

(e) He encouraged everyone to vote in the election on Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup> for State Treasurer and District #77 State Representative.

(f) He wished everyone Happy Thanksgiving.

**Police Chief Lentz** commented that he has discussed the security in City Hall with Mrs. Hayes and drills are planned to test the security in the building.

**Police Chief Lentz** reminded everyone that the annual Caroline Darby Toy Giveaway will be held on Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup> in the Bogue Falaya Hall. Interested families should contact the Covington Police Department to register.

**Council President O'Keefe** reminded everyone that the next Council meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 6 P.M.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 P.M.



R.S. "SAM" O'KEEFE  
Council President



BONNIE D. CHAMPAGNE  
Council Clerk