

**CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 16, 2018**

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, Diane Weiss, 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 Police Chief Tim Lentz.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilman Rolling made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilman Smith. 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. 2017-11-04 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Providing for an Increase in Compensation for the City Council for the City of Covington, Which Increase Will Become Effective on July 1, 2019 (Callahan) (TABLED ON DECEMBER 12, 2017)**

Council President O'Keefe led a discussion on Item No. 2017-11-04.

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

Councilman Coner made a statement in which he discussed his reasons for not supporting a pay increase for the City Council at this time.

Mayor Cooper clarified that Civil Service (classified) employees are different from municipal employees in that Civil Service employees are not entitled to pay increases based on performance. Also, he mentioned that although Civil Service employees will receive a two (2%) percent pay increase, municipal employees are also eligible to receive a two (2%) percent pay increase with an excellent or above satisfactory performance evaluation.

Councilman McMath acknowledged there is a gap in compensation between the Covington City Council and other local councils in that the compensation for the Covington City Council is much lower than most other councils. He

suggested that the ordinance be amended to increase the compensation, but not as originally proposed.

Councilman McMath made a motion to amend Item No. 2017-11-04 to read as follows:

Page 2, lines 15 and 16, shall read, "...The compensation is hereby increased from \$750.00 per month to \$900.00 per month for the council members from council districts A, B, C, D and E..." and

Page 2, lines 18 and 19, shall read, "...The compensation is hereby increased from \$750.00 per month to \$900.00 per month for the two (2) council members at large..."

Seconded by Councilman Callahan. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Abstain – 1 (Coner) to amend Item No. 2017-11-04 as stated above. Item No. 2017-11-04 was amended as stated above.

Councilman Callahan made a motion to adopt Item No. 2017-11-04, as amended, seconded by Councilwoman Weiss. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Abstain – 1 (Coner) to adopt Item No. 2017-11-04, as amended. Item No. 2017-11-04 was adopted, as amended.

2. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2017-11-01 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Declaring Surplus Certain Vehicles and Equipment Owned by the City of Covington (O’Keefe)

Council President O’Keefe led a discussion on Item No. 2017-11-01.

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

Councilman Coner made a motion to adopt Item No. 2017-11-01, seconded by Councilman Smith. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Item No. 2017-11-01. Item No. 2017-11-01 was adopted.

New Business

Items to be voted on:

1. RESOLUTION NO. 2018-01 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Approving the Employment of and Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into a Contract for Legal Representation in a Lawsuit Regarding Recovering the Costs Associated with Opioid Addiction (O’Keefe)

Councilman McMath led a discussion on Resolution No. 2018-01.

Mayor Cooper mentioned that the City of Covington, along with other municipalities, have suffered damages as a result of the opioid addiction epidemic. In order to recover the damages from unreimbursed expenses and other losses, he recommends the adoption of this resolution in which the City will retain the services of Porteous, Hainkel & Johnson for representation in a civil action lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and distributors.

Councilwoman Weiss made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2018-01, seconded by Councilman Callahan. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2018-01. Resolution No. 2018-01 was adopted.

2. RESOLUTION NO. 2018-02 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Establishing the EOC Facility Advisory Committee (McMath)

Councilman McMath read Resolution No. 2018-02 into the record and led a discussion on the resolution.

Councilman McMath requested that each City Council member and the Mayor announce his or her appointment(s) to the EOC Facility Advisory Committee this evening. Also, he stated that the facility is not currently on the market, but St. Tammany Parish Government has indicated they will divest themselves of the facility. He also pointed out that there is no set number of committee meetings planned as it is an open-ended timeline.

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2018-02, seconded by Councilwoman Weiss. Roll call was unanimous to adopt Resolution No. 2018-02. Resolution No. 2018-02 was adopted.

Roll call for appointments to EOC Facility Advisory Committee:

Councilman Callahan, District A	-	Mr. Ben Patterson
Councilman Coner, District B	-	Mr. John Botsford
Councilwoman Weiss, District C	-	Mr. Jeff Schoen
Councilman Rolling, District D	-	Ms. Jan Robert
Councilman Smith, District E	-	Mr. Bruce Falkenstein
Councilman McMath, At Large	-	Mr. Townsend Underhill
Council President O’Keefe, At Large	-	Ms. Pat Clanton
Mayor Cooper	-	Mr. Lane Carson
Mayor Cooper	-	Mr. Tim Lantrip

Items for discussion:

(a) Old Courthouse Committee (Coner)

Councilman Coner stated that this item has been resolved.

(b) Update on Request for “No Dumping” Signs on North Florida Street (Coner)

Councilman Coner stated that this item has been resolved.

(c) Update on Easement for Ozone Creek (Coner)

Councilman Coner requested an update on the process for acquiring the easements from the citizens who live along Ozone Creek and asked if the City will contact the Poole property owners.

Mayor Cooper stated that the City has completed two drainage projects in which property owners were contacted and conveyed permission for drainage work. The acquisition of the easements along Ozone Creek, which involves over 16 property owners, is the third and largest project. A meeting will be scheduled to devise a plan for notifying the property owners and acquiring permission to begin the work along Ozone Creek.

**(d) Selection Process for Interim Appointments for Vacant Council Seats
(Coner)**

Council President O’Keefe commented that this has been an unprecedented term in which a councilman died in office and a councilman resigned due to his election to the State House of Representatives. Also, he stated that the Council followed the process according to the Covington Home Rule Charter for appointing interim councilmembers.

Councilman Coner requested an explanation of the selection process to appoint the interim councilmembers.

Council President O’Keefe replied that Rod Rodrigue, City Attorney, provided him with process for replacing a councilmember who dies while in office as outlined in the Covington Home Rule Charter. Several names were suggested and he contacted all the councilmembers to discuss the impending interim appointment. After discussion with the Council, he recommended Mr. Eddie Fielding, who was unanimously appointed by the Council to serve as Interim Councilman at Large until the election was held in early 2017.

Council President O’Keefe commented that Mrs. Weiss was recommended by former Councilman Wright since she had been very active in the community and would be the right person for the interim position since she did not intend to run for the permanent position.

Councilwoman Weiss commented that former Councilman Wright contacted her and asked if she would be willing to serve as the interim appointment. He also mentioned that he was considering several folks for the interim appointment and would present his recommendation to the Council.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Council District and Committee Reports

Council President O’Keefe requested that due to the inclement weather and the imminent freeze, everyone please keep their comments to a minimum.

1. District A –

Councilman Callahan welcomed Mrs. Diane Weiss to the Council. Also, he thanked everyone who donated their time and financial contributions to the Martin Luther King Day celebration. He especially thanked the City of Covington for its help in organizing and preparing for the celebration.

2. District B –

Councilman Coner gave honor to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He recognized the January birthdays for City employees. He reminded everyone to shop locally to support our local businesses. Also, he asked everyone to keep the people in California who are victims of the mudslides in our thoughts and prayers and to pray for peace on earth. His quote for this evening was, “Two things define you – your patience when you have nothing and your attitude when you have everything.”

3. District C –

Councilwoman Weiss stated that she has completed all the required ethics and HR-related training in connection with her interim position. Also, she mentioned that she has begun efforts to best communicate with her constituents in District C.

4. District D –

Councilman Rolling reminded everyone about the Olympia parade on February 3rd at 6 P.M. and the Mardi Gras Day parades on Tuesday, February 13th beginning at 10 A.M., all of which will follow the traditional parade route. Also, he mentioned that the Carnival in Covington Committee is working on this year's event and encouraged the public to participate in the day's festivities. He announced that traditional Mardi Gras floats will be included in the Mardi Gras Day parade this year and spots on the floats are available for purchase. In addition, he mentioned that after the parade, there will be food and music at the Trailhead. Also, he congratulated our New Orleans Saints on a great season and looks forward to the 2018/2019 season. Upcoming events: OnStage in Covington will present, "An Evening With Scott Record," on Wednesday, January 24th at 7:30 P.M. in the Fuhrmann Auditorium; Coffee with Mayor Cooper on Wednesday, January 31st at 9 A.M.; and the Farmer's Market every Wednesday and Saturday. Also, he wished everyone Happy New Year and looks forward to 2018.

5. District E –

Councilman Smith congratulated Councilwoman Diane Weiss on participating in her first Council meeting. Also, he mentioned that Ms. Susan Bonnette from the Northshore Community Foundation recently announced that philanthropists in the St. Tammany Parish area donated \$7.4 million to the Northshore Community Foundation in 2017. He remarked that the Northshore Community Foundation is a tremendous foundation and thanked Ms. Bonnette and her associates for their efforts.

6. At Large (Vice President) –

Councilman McMath acknowledged that three individuals have qualified for the special election on March 24th for the Council District C seat and two of the candidates, Mr. Tim Burke and Ms. Tiffany McGary, are in the audience this evening. He congratulated Mr. Burke and Ms. McGary for qualifying and for stepping forward to serve our community. Also, he encouraged everyone to drive safely on the roads this evening.

7. At Large (President) –

Council President O'Keefe reminded everyone that the Council meeting on February 6th has been cancelled due to the lack of ordinances or resolutions scheduled for action. The only Council meeting in February will be held on February 20th.

B. Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Cooper's comments:

- (a) He announced that due to the impending weather conditions, only essential personnel will report to work tomorrow, particularly the five department heads. Also, City Hall will not be officially open tomorrow, but personnel will be on hand to answer phone calls and greet any visitors.
- (b) With regard to the EOC Facility Advisory Committee, he expressed his excitement for the City to be a part of this committee and to vet the different possibilities that may be available to this historic property. He looks forward to the recommendations from the committee.

(c) He mentioned that he gave a "State of the City" address at the annual city employee lunch meeting which was held last week. In his address, he gave an update on City projects and events to members of the City Council and employees who were present.

(d) He gave an update on prevalent projects:

(1) West 29th Avenue Bridge at Mile Branch – The bridge will be completely closed for construction in about two weeks. The contractor will demolish the bridge and construct a new bridge. The project should be completed in 90 days, weather permitting.

(2) The Lift Station at E. 9th Avenue and Jahncke Avenue – The contractor will mobilize in the next couple of weeks to rehab this lift station in which the above-ground pumps will be converted to submersible pumps.

(3) The sidewalk project on North Florida Street is ongoing.

(4) The drainage project on Lurline Drive in River Forest is ongoing.

(e) Regarding the election on March 24th, he announced that the Alliance for Good Government will sponsor a candidates' forum on Wednesday, January 31st at 6:30 P.M. in the Council Chambers for the Covington Council District C seat and the Justice of the Peace Ward 1 seat.

Councilwoman Weiss inquired as to the completion date for the Lurline Drive project in River Forest.

Mayor Cooper responded that due to weather delays, the completion date is at least two weeks behind schedule. He estimated that the project should be completed within the next six to eight weeks.

Police Chief Tim Lentz announced that the closure of the bridge over the Bogue Falaya River for survey work has been cancelled tonight due to the weather.

Councilman Rolling inquired as to the detour route when the bridge is closed.

Police Chief Tim Lentz responded that DOTD has handled the detour signage and 18-wheeler trucks have been detoured to Hwy. 1077.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:52 P.M.



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



BONNIE D. CHAMPAGNE
Council Clerk