

**CITY OF COVINGTON
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 19, 2019**

Council President McMath called the regular meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Roll call was as follows:

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

ABSENT: Joey Roberts

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Interim Police Chief Stephen Culotta.

CONFIRMATION OF MAYORAL APPOINTMENT OF STEPHEN CULOTTA AS POLICE CHIEF

Mayor Cooper presented Stephen Culotta as the new Police Chief and respectfully requested his confirmation by the Council.

Councilman O'Keefe made a motion to confirm Stephen Culotta as Police Chief, seconded by Councilman Coner. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to confirm Stephen Culotta as Police Chief for the City of Covington.

Police Chief Culotta thanked Mayor Cooper for the trust and confidence in appointing him as Police Chief and the City Council for believing in him and confirming his appointment. Also, he thanked his family and everyone who has supported him in reaching this position. He promised to continue to serve the citizens of Covington and to bring them the quality police department they deserve.

Police Chief Stephen Culotta was sworn in by City Attorney Rod Rodrigue.

Councilman O'Keefe congratulated Police Chief Culotta on his appointment and confirmation. Also, he commended the Covington Police Department for the job they do each and every day.

Councilman Coner encouraged Police Chief Culotta and the Covington Police Department to contact the Council for any assistance needed to perform their jobs.

Councilman Rolling congratulated Police Chief Culotta on his appointment and extended the Council's full support to him and the Covington Police Department.

APPEARERS

1. **Police Chief Stephen Culotta** introduced Officer Joshua Layton Simmons to the Council, Administration and public.

2. **Mayor Cooper** introduced the members of the Mayor's Council on Healthy Lifestyles and thanked them for their efforts in facilitating the program over the past eight years. Dr. Michael Haas, representing the Mayor's Council on Healthy Lifestyles, gave a presentation on the Council's progress over the past year.

3. **Mayor Cooper** introduced the members of the Mayor's Youth Leadership Council and thanked them for their efforts in addressing the needs of teenagers and their families in Covington. Local high school students Ross Hightower, Meg Mercante, Mary-Kate Murphy and Morgan O'Donnell gave a presentation on the Youth Leadership Council's events over the past year.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by **Councilman Rolling**. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (**Roberts**) 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. 2019-01-01** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Declaring the 20 Foot Alley Traversing Square 2106, Lying Between North Tyler Street and North Harrison Street and Bounded by West 21st Avenue and West 22nd Avenue, Division of New Covington, City of Covington, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, Abandoned, Vacated, Closed and Not Needed for Public Purposes (Planning Case No. 18-12-02Street/Alley Revocation) (**O'Keefe**)

Councilman O'Keefe led a discussion on Item No. 2019-01-01.

Councilman Coner 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 O'Keefe made a motion to table Item No. 2019-01-01 for additional information, seconded by **Councilman Callahan**. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (**Roberts**) to table Item No. 2019-01-01 for additional information. Item No. 2019-01-01 was tabled for additional information.

2. **PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2019-02-01** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Authorizing the Mayor to Execute an Act of Lease with Roy Burns for the Use of His Property for Public Parking (**McMath**)

Council President McMath led a discussion on Item No. 2019-02-01.

Mayor Cooper pointed out that this lease is for the property on the north side of the Woodwright Shop on North New Hampshire Street.

Councilman O'Keefe 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 O’Keefe made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-02-01, seconded by Councilman Callahan. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-02-01. Item No. 2019-02-01 was adopted.

3. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2019-02-02 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the 2019 Operating and Capital Budget for Salaries and Benefits (McMath)

Council President McMath led a discussion on Item No. 2019-02-02.

Chief Administrative Officer Gina Hayes stated that due to an oversight, the salary of an employee who had received a promotion years ago had not been increased and this budget amendment will correct the error.

Councilman O’Keefe 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 O’Keefe made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-02-02, seconded by Councilman Rolling. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-02-02. Item No. 2019-02-02 was adopted.

4. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2019-02-03 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending a Section of the Comprehensive Pay/Step Plan for the Covington Police Department (O’Keefe)

Councilman O’Keefe led a discussion on Item No. 2019-02-03.

Chief Administrative Officer Gina Hayes stated that since the position of Dispatcher has been eliminated from the Covington Police Department, the position and title of TAC Officer should replace the position and title of Dispatcher on the Comprehensive Pay/Step Plan to adequately compensate for such responsibilities, training and certification.

Councilman Callahan 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 O’Keefe made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-02-03, seconded by Councilman Callahan. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-02-03. Item No. 2019-02-03 was adopted.

New Business

Items to be voted on:

1. RESOLUTION NO. 2019-05 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Confirming the Mayoral Appointment of Stephanie Boyles to the Covington Historic District Commission (CHDC) to Fill an Unexpired Term (Mayor)

Mayor Cooper requested the Council’s confirmation of the appointment of Stephanie Boyles to the Covington Historic District Commission to fill the unexpired term of Shiloh Moates, who resigned recently.

Councilman O’Keefe made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2019-05, seconded by Councilman Coner. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to adopt Resolution No. 2019-05. Resolution No. 2019-05 was adopted.

Council President McMath thanked Ms. Moates for her service on the Covington Historic District Commission.

2. RESOLUTION NO. 2019-06 – A Resolution of the Covington City Council Acknowledging Receipt and Compliance with the Louisiana Attestation Questionnaire from the Legislative Auditor’s Office (McMath)

Council President McMath led a discussion on Resolution No. 2019-06.

Councilman O’Keefe made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2019-06, seconded by Councilman Coner. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to adopt Resolution No. 2019-06. Resolution No. 2019-06 was adopted.

OPENING THE AGENDA

Council President McMath stated that he received a request to open the agenda to add Resolution No. 2019-07 entitled, “A Resolution of the Covington City Council Recognizing Patricia Fuhrmann Clanton for Her Achievements, Community Service and Contributions to the City of Covington.”

Councilman Smith made a motion to open the agenda to add Resolution No. 2019-07, seconded by Councilman Rolling. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to open the agenda to add Resolution No. 2019-07. The agenda was opened to add Resolution No. 2019-07.

Each member of the Council read aloud two or three paragraphs of Resolution No. 2019-07.

Councilman Rolling made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2019-07, seconded by Councilman Coner. Roll call: Yeas – 6; Absent – 1 (Roberts) to adopt Resolution No. 2019-07. Resolution No. 2019-07 was adopted.

Mrs. Pat Clanton stated that she is truly overwhelmed and grateful for this recognition.

Councilman Coner read his prepared statement: “We are blessed and honored to celebrate the 90th birthday of Mrs. Patricia Clanton. She and I served on the Council together for two terms. Mrs. Clanton has been a dedicated and committed resident serving the City of Covington and its residents and visitors. We thank her for the contributions made to our community. We pray for continued blessings for her and her lovely, wonderful family. We wish her many, many more birthdays!”

Councilman O’Keefe commented that Mrs. Clanton was an inspiration to all who served with her on the Council and expressed his appreciation for her contributions to the City of Covington.

Councilman Rolling thanked Mrs. Clanton for her guidance through the years and everything that she has done for the City of Covington.

Councilman Smith wished Mrs. Clanton a very happy 90th birthday and on behalf of the entire City Council, thanked her for her community service and contributions to the City of Covington.

Council President McMath thanked Mrs. Clanton for her guidance and remarked that it has been his pleasure getting to know her.

Mayor Cooper commented that five years ago, he issued a Proclamation declaring "Patricia Fuhrmann Clanton Day" on Mrs. Clanton's 85th birthday and today, the Council has adopted a resolution celebrating her 90th birthday and acknowledging her tremendous contributions to the City of Covington.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS

Council District and Committee Reports

1. District A –

Councilman Callahan commended Councilman Larry Rolling for his efforts and contributions with regard to the Mardi Gras Day celebration in Covington.

2. District B –

Councilman Coner gave honor to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He recognized the March birthdays for City employees. He reminded everyone to shop locally to support our local businesses. He mentioned that speeding has become a serious problem in the City of Covington and recommended the formation of a committee to discuss ideas to keep Covington residents safe.

Council President McMath requested that the Public Safety Committee schedule a meeting to discuss the speeding problem.

Councilman Coner's quote for this evening was, "Leaders think and talk about solutions; followers think and talk about the problems, by Brian Tracy."

3. District C – Absent.

Council President McMath read a statement prepared by Councilman Joey Roberts, who could not attend the meeting tonight due to a medical procedure: "In my absence I would like to say a few words about Stephen Culotta. Upon coming on board to the city council last year, I had a swift learning curve to catch up. Everyone on staff has been amazing and I have been blessed to know help is always a phone call away. When Mr. Lentz stepped down and Mr. Culotta was appointed interim, I cannot imagine the level of responsibility it would take to fill that void. However, without missing a beat, I have been absolutely impressed with the responsiveness, respectfulness and the professional integrity Stephen Culotta has demonstrated as the interim Police Chief. Upon learning that he will be considered as the newly appointed Police Chief, I am sorry that I am not present to give my blessing. I whole-heartedly support this decision given his years of dedication to this city and his care and concern for ALL of our citizens of Covington. Stephen Culotta, Thank you for all you do, and I wish you nothing but the best moving forward."

4. District D –

Councilman Rolling mentioned that nine new businesses applied for occupational licenses from mid-January 2019 through mid-March 2019. Also, he mentioned that Carnival in Covington was a great success and thanked the committee members for their hard work in planning, organizing and presenting the parade and the after-parade party at the Trailhead. He thanked the Administration and Council for their support and the sponsors for their donations. He announced that planning for next year's Carnival in Covington will begin very soon.

5. District E –

Councilman Smith congratulated Stephen Culotta on his appointment as Police Chief and Mayor Cooper for making the appointment. Also, he commended Councilman Larry Rolling for his efforts on the Carnival in Covington celebration. Upcoming events: Rockin' the Rails concert series every Thursday in April from 5pm until 7:30pm at the Trailhead; the Art Market sponsored by the St. Tammany Art Association on Saturday, April 6th; Spring for Art sponsored by the St. Tammany Art Association on Saturday, April 13th; Sunset at the Landing concert on Friday, April 19th from 6pm until 9pm at the Columbia Street Landing; Columbia Street Block Party on Friday, April 26th from 6:30pm until 9:30pm; Covington Antiques and Uniques Festival on April 27th and 28th from 10am until 5pm at the Trailhead; and the Farmer's Market every Wednesday and Saturday. Also, he mentioned that sewer line repair work is underway in District E along with drainage work in the downtown area. He thanked Public Works and the City Engineer for their work in addressing these issues.

6. At Large (Vice President) –

Councilman O'Keefe commented that Mrs. Pat Clanton is an inspiration for young people in the City of Covington. Also, he congratulated Chief Culotta on his appointment and mentioned that he is the first police chief who has come up through the ranks.

7. At Large (President) –

Council President McMath wished a happy birthday to Mrs. Pat Clanton. Also, he congratulated Chief Culotta on his appointment.

B. Administrative Comments and Reports

1. Mayor Cooper's comments:

(a) He gave an update on projects that are scheduled for completion in the very near future:

(1) Drain cleaning and inspections in downtown – Up to \$150,000 has been allocated towards identifying the problems in the downtown area, particularly on the route from Columbia to Lockwood to Florida to Plaza, across to Gibson and to the river. The contractor has completed the cleaning and inspection of a portion of the downtown drainage system. The crew has removed over 30 tons of debris from the storm drains and a 100% mainline blockage was discovered at the corner of Lockwood and Columbia which is currently being repaired with an emergency requisition. Full inspection summaries and videos are expected to be delivered to the City Engineer within the next three weeks. Upon receipt, projects will be planned for additional improvements.

(2) The Ernest J. Cooper Memorial Fire Station – Final inspections are underway for the expansion of the fire station with two additional bays. The interior work is 95% complete and the site work is in progress. Work is expected to be completed by the end of April.

(3) West 8th Avenue Safety Improvements – Immediate improvements to the intersection have been completed and final plans for long term improvements have been received. The total cost of the project is estimated to be under \$150,000. Quotes will be requested from eligible contractors and will be opened on April 4th.

(4) Rutland Street Drainage Improvements – This is a major drainage project that is underway near St. Scholastica School, the AT&T Building and Jahncke Avenue. Work should continue for the next six weeks.

(5) The old fire house renovation on Theard Street – The majority of the interior and exterior work is complete and the site work should be completed in about three weeks. The first event planned in the Fire Station Event Center will be Coffee with the Mayor on Wednesday, April 24th at 9am.

(6) Bogue Falaya Park Bulkhead – The pile-driving work is complete and the contractor is currently demobilizing the crane from the site. Site work, including the boardwalk and railing, access and handicapped parking, is underway. The project is estimated to be over 50% complete with total completion expected by the end of April.

(7) Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Survey (SSES) Sewer Point Repairs -- This project consists of 64 sewer point repairs on deep sewer lines in various areas of the city. To this date, 48 repairs have been made and the remaining 16 repairs include four on Jefferson Avenue, one on Vermont Street and 11 on Rutland Street. Some asphalt patching will be needed at several of the previously-repaired locations. Work is expected to continue over the next four weeks.


(b) He announced that the City of Covington received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for fiscal year 2017. He mentioned this was the seventh consecutive year the City has been awarded the Certificate by the Government Finance Officers Association. He acknowledged and commended Chief Administrative Officer Gina Hayes and Director of Finance Alisa Faciane for their adherence to the best financial practices. He thanked the CPA firm of Carr, Riggs and Ingram who formally submitted the City's annual financial report.

(c) He announced that the Covington Fire Department's Station No. 2 on Philip Drive is now fully staffed and operating on a 24 hour basis. He thanked the Covington Fire Department and the entire City of Covington team for their hard work in making this second station possible. He mentioned that 35% of Covington's calls originate in the area that will now be covered by Station No. 2. He pointed out that by opening the second fire station, the City's PIAL rating will be increased and will also enable faster response time to all our citizens.

(d) He announced that the dedication of the restrooms at Rev. Peter S. Atkins Park will be held on Saturday, March 23rd at 9am. He invited the Council and public to attend the ceremony. Also, he mentioned that the dedication ceremony is being held in conjunction with the Covington Cares About the West 30's event.

Councilman O'Keefe reminded everyone about the election on March 30th and that early voting is underway through Saturday, March 23rd.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.



PATRICK McMATH
Council President



BONNIE D. CHAMPAGNE
Council Clerk