

**CITY OF COVINGTON  
COVINGTON CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 5, 2019**

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

Roll call was as follows:

PRESENT: Peter Lewis Sr., John Botsford, Cody Ludwig, Mark W. Verret,  
Larry Rolling and Patrick McMath

ABSENT: Joey Roberts

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Mark R. Johnson, Chief Administrative Officer Gina Hayes, City Attorney Rod Rodrigue, Police Chief Stephen Culotta, Fire Chief Gary Blocker, Assistant Fire Chief Steven Michell, Director of Finance Stephen Sanders and Utility Billing Director Cindy Samuel

A Moment of Silence was observed.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Brownie Troop from Covington Elementary School.

*APPEARERS (appeared later in the meeting)*

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

Council Vice President Rolling made a motion to adopt the consent calendar, seconded by Councilman Botsford. 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. 2019-09-01** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Following Provisions of the Covington Code of Ordinances: Chapter 98 Utilities, Article IV. Rates and Charges, Sec. 98-133. Reduction of Certain Fees for the Elderly and Disabled (Lewis)

Council President McMath led a discussion on Item No. 2019-09-01.

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

Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-09-01, seconded by Council Vice President Rolling. Roll call – Yeas: 6; Absent: 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-09-01. Item No. 2019-09-01 was adopted.

**2. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2019-09-02** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Official Zoning Map of the City of Covington, Louisiana, to Reclassify Lots 9 and 10, Square 2604, Division of New Covington, City of Covington, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, Which Property is Located at the Southeast Corner of West 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue and North Van Buren Street, From CO (Commercial Office/Professional) to ML (Light Industrial/Manufacturing) (Zoning Case No. 19-08-02ZC) (Lewis)

**Council President McMath led a discussion on Item No. 2019-09-02.**

**City Attorney Rod Rodrigue** stated that this item is for the expansion of Jackson Cabinetry and it was unanimously approved by the Zoning Commission after hearing no opposition from surrounding neighbors.

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

**Councilman Botsford made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-09-02, seconded by Council President McMath. Roll call – Yeas: 6; Absent: 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-09-02. Item No. 2019-09-02 was adopted.**

**3. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2019-09-03** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Adopting the 2020 Operating Budget and the Five Year Capital Outlay Budget for the Years 2020-2024 for the City of Covington (McMath)

**Council President McMath thanked the Council and Administration for the productive budget workshop. Also, he thanked Gina Hayes and the Administration for the prompt response to the questions submitted by the Council.**

**Council President McMath led a discussion on Item No. 2019-09-03.**

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

**Council Vice President Rolling made a motion to amend Item No. 2019-09-03 as reflected in the printout dated November 5, 2019, seconded by Councilman Verret. Roll call – Yeas: 6; Absent: 1 (Roberts) to amend Item No. 2019-09-03 as reflected in the printout dated November 5, 2019. Item No. 2019-09-03 was amended as reflected in the printout dated November 5, 2019.**

**Council Vice President Rolling made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-09-03, as amended, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. Roll call – Yeas: 6; Absent: 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-09-03, as amended. Item No. 2019-09-03 was adopted, as amended.**

**4. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2019-09-04** – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Setting the Compensation for the Mayor of the City of Covington for the Year 2020 (McMath)

**Council President McMath led a discussion on Item No. 2019-09-04.**

**Council Vice President Rolling made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilwoman Ludwig. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.**

**Council President McMath made a motion to amend Item No. 2019-09-04 as follows: Page 1, line 23, shall read, "Annual salary of \$91,700.00 representing a \$1,000.00 increase over the 2019 rate of compensation..."**

**Seconded by Councilman Verret. Roll call – Yeas: 6; Absent: 1 (Roberts) to amend Item No. 2019-09-04 as set out above. Item No. 2019-09-04 was amended as set out above.**

**Council President McMath made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-09-04 as amended, seconded by Council Vice President Rolling. Roll call – Yeas: 6; Absent: 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-09-04 as amended. Item No. 2019-09-04 was adopted as amended.**

**5. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2019-09-05 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Declaring Surplus Property Owned by the City of Covington and Authorizing the Mayor to Execute Any and All Documents in Connection with the Donation of Said Surplus Property (Verret)**

**Councilman Verret led a discussion on Item No. 2019-09-05.**

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

**Councilman Verret made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-09-05, seconded by Council President McMath. Roll call – Yeas: 6; Absent: 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-09-05. Item No. 2019-09-05 was adopted.**

**6. PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION ON ITEM NO. 2019-10-01 – An Ordinance of the City of Covington Amending the Following Provisions of the Covington Code of Ordinances: Chapter 98 Utilities, Article IV. Rates and Charges, Sec. 98-122. Water rates, Sec. 98-123. Sewerage rates and Sec. 98-124. Garbage, trash and recyclables collection charges (McMath)**

**Council President McMath led a discussion on Item No. 2019-10-01.**

**Council Vice President Rolling made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Councilman Botsford. There were no objections to closing the public hearing. The public hearing was closed.**

**Councilman Verret made a motion to adopt Item No. 2019-10-01, seconded by Council Vice President Rolling. Roll call – Yeas: 6; Absent: 1 (Roberts) to adopt Item No. 2019-10-01. Item No. 2019-10-01 was adopted.**

**APPEARERS** *(moved from earlier in the agenda)*

**Council President McMath** introduced Mrs. Diane Weiss, who appeared on behalf of the 15<sup>th</sup> Street Flyers. She gave a brief history of the “4 on the 4<sup>th</sup>” Race and a recap of the 2019 “4 on the 4<sup>th</sup>” Race. She presented checks from the proceeds of the race to the Tammany Trace Foundation, Boys and Girls Club, Covington Firefighters Association, Covington Police Department – Wade Sharp FOP Lodge #43 and the West St. Tammany YMCA.

**Council President McMath** thanked Mrs. Weiss for her efforts in organizing and presenting the “4 on the 4<sup>th</sup>” Race and the other events that benefit the community.

Also, Mrs. Weiss reminded everyone about the “Tammany Turkey Trot Walk/Run” that will be held on Thanksgiving Day, November 28<sup>th</sup>, at 8am and will benefit the Northshore Food Bank.

*(Ms. Danyell Fabre was scheduled to appear but was not able to attend the meeting.)*

**New Business**

**Items for discussion:**

1. 2020 Council Meeting Schedule (McMath)

**Council President McMath read the Council meeting schedule for 2020 into the record. There were no comments regarding the meeting schedule.**

**COMMENTS AND REPORTS**

**Council District and Committee Reports**

**1. District A –**

**Councilman Lewis** announced some upcoming events: (1) The Everafter Boutique Pop Up Shop presented by Danyell Fabre on November 16<sup>th</sup> from 11am until 3pm in the Westay Suites in Covington; (2) Stepping Into Greatness Empowerment Conference presented by Ashley Marissa on January 25, 2020 from 10am until 3pm at the Hampton Inn and Suites in Harahan; and the Veterans Small Business Week Outreach Event presented by SBA and SCORE on Thursday, November 7<sup>th</sup> from 6pm until 7:30pm at the VFW Post 7286 on Ronald Reagan Highway. Also, he proudly announced that a basketball team has been started at Pine View Middle School. He expressed his appreciation to Principal Ledet and Mr. Donald for their assistance in bringing sports to Pine View.

**2. District B –**

**Councilman Botsford** mentioned that the Northshore Food Bank’s Inaugural “CANstruction” event was a huge success and over 20,000 food items were donated to the Food Bank. Also, he reminded everyone that the Youth Service Bureau’s Second Annual Breakfast with Santa fundraiser will be held on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at Lakeview Regional Medical Center and will benefit at-risk children.

**3. District C – Absent.**

**4. District D –**

**Councilwoman Ludwig** reminded everyone that Mayor Johnson has scheduled a meeting with River Forest residents on November 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers. Also, she announced that the Oxtoberfest Beer Fest raised \$12,000 for the Boys and Girls Club. Upcoming events: Pallets with a Purpose fundraiser event sponsored by the Northshore Food Bank on Friday, November 8<sup>th</sup>; Three Rivers Art Festival on Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, November 10<sup>th</sup> from

10am until 5pm on both days; City Hall will be closed on Monday, November 11<sup>th</sup> in observance of Veterans Day and on Thursday, November 28<sup>th</sup> and Friday, November 29<sup>th</sup> for the Thanksgiving holidays; and Coffee and Conversation with Mayor Mark on Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at 9am in the Firehouse Event Center.

**Councilman Botsford** mentioned that Pallets with a Purpose will begin at 6:30pm and will be held at the Food Bank's new location.

**5. District E –**

**Councilman Verret** stated that as a result of the increase in traffic near the schools in District E, a review of the students' safety and security has been initiated. He reminded everyone to pay attention when driving through school zones. Also, in light of the amount of green waste and debris from the recent storm event, he appreciated the information in the City's November-December newsletter about debris pick-up. Also, he reminded the public that early voting is underway and encouraged everyone to get out and vote.

**Councilwoman Ludwig** thanked the Police, Fire and Public Works departments for their prompt response during the recent storm event.

**6. At Large (Vice President) –**

**Council Vice President Rolling** mentioned that St. Tammany Parish Hospital issued a neighborhood update concerning steel placement on the construction site between the hours of 7pm and 3am tonight and indicated that some lane closures may occur. Also, he announced that the Covington Rotary is sponsoring its Feeding the Needy Fundraising Luncheon on Friday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> at 11:30am in St. Paul's Assembly Center and Senator John Kennedy will be the guest speaker. Also, he thanked Aimee Faucheux and her staff for another great Rockin' the Rails concert series. Also, he mentioned that the Carnival in Covington Committee is hard at work on the Carnival Day 2020 celebration. The theme and grand marshal of the parade will be announced in the next few weeks. He encouraged any bands and/or riders who may be interested in participating in the parade to visit the Carnival in Covington website for more information. He wished everyone a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

**7. At Large (President) –**

**Council President McMath** thanked Mayor Mark along with the Public Works, Fire and Police departments for their efforts during the recent storm event. Also, he reminded everyone that early voting is open this week.

**Administrative Comments and Reports**

**1. Mayor Johnson-**

(a) He discussed the recent storm event and the moderate power outage that it caused. Also, he mentioned that several water oak trees broke during the storm causing downed power lines and some power outages. He suggested that City officials along with the Tree Board begin discussing the City's present tree canopy and plans for the future. Also, he discussed CLECO's pre-determined priorities after a storm event. He thanked Public Works and CLECO for their efforts in cleaning up and restoring power to the City.

**Council Vice President Rolling** suggested that a link to CLECO on the City's website might be helpful for the residents when reporting power outages.

**Mayor Johnson** responded that residents are encouraged to report power outages to CLECO but CLECO has a “ping system” that alerts them immediately during power outages.

**Mayor Johnson** pointed out that the Covington Police Department responded to over 100 calls for service on the Saturday after the storm and not one of the calls was for criminal activity. He commended our citizens for their character in keeping the community safe and secure.

He mentioned that the Fire and Police departments maintain a list of the elderly and infirmed citizens in our community and after the service calls slow down, they make welfare checks on those citizens. He has instructed both departments to make a more comprehensive list of our vulnerable citizens so that we can follow a more systematic approach in checking on them after a storm event.

He commented that he would like to see improvements to the City’s website which will provide better communication to our citizens. Also, he encouraged everyone to sign up for his email blast which will provide another means of communication.

He commended Public Works for the great job they did in barricading dangerous areas after the storm as well as keeping our drinking water flowing and wastewater away from our homes. Also, he commended Norman Pelitire for his work at the wastewater treatment plant during and after the storm event.

He mentioned that the City’s sewer lines are old and many of them are made of terracotta or wood. For this reason, his Administration will continue to keep sewer point repairs as one of its top priorities.

(b) He thanked Public Works for cleaning or replacing dirty street signs and for replacing over 200 stop signs throughout the City.

(c) He announced that the City’s November-December newsletter has been released and copies are available at Acquistapace’s, I-Stop, Braswell Drugs, Beck-N-Call, City Hall and the Trailhead Museum.

(d) He mentioned that the “Slow Your Roll” campaign has had amazing results and the signs have reminded motorists to slow down and to come to a complete stop at stop signs. He stated that our Police Department pulled over about 150 people over the past month and gave them warnings but no tickets were issued.

(e) He announced that he will be hosting another meeting for River Forest residents on Wednesday, November 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers. The topics to be discussed are roads, drainage, sewerage, golf carts and police patrols. He encouraged any other groups of citizens and/or neighborhoods who would like to meet with him to contact his office to set up a meeting.

(f) He mentioned that Covington Police Lt. Tammy Blocker met with Mr. Carey of Jim Carey Distributing Company regarding residents’ concerns about 18-wheelers using the narrow streets in the West 20s to reach his facility. Mr. Carey advised that an email was sent to the carriers in which they were reminded to use the appropriate truck route through the City and he will send a follow-up email to remind them. In addition, a plan was developed in which Public Works will create a larger “Local deliveries only” sign and the signs will be installed on the north and south sides of West 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Also, a no-left turn sign will be placed at the intersection of West 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Polk Street.

(g) He announced that Coffee and Conversation with Mayor Mark will be held on Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at 9am in the Firehouse Event Center.

(h) He announced that the Rotary Club of Covington will be hosting U.S. Senator John Kennedy at the Feeding the Needy Fundraising Luncheon on Friday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> at 11:30am in the St. Paul's Assembly Center.

(i) He mentioned that currently there are over 60 capital projects underway and gave an update on some infrastructure projects:

(1) Cleveland Street Bridge was recently completed for final inspection. Public Works has temporarily patched the potholes on either side of it and permanent repairs for the solid base are budgeted for next year.

(2) 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge had a pre-construction meeting on October 17<sup>th</sup> and is in the construction phase.

(3) West 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge had a pre-construction meeting on October 9<sup>th</sup> and is in the construction phase.

(4) River Forest/Patricia Drive drainage and paving is in 30% design phase.

(5) River Forest Smoke and Camera Evaluation – Bid packages are out and the bid opening is scheduled for November 19<sup>th</sup>.

(6) Drainage, Inspecting and Cleaning in Downtown, Phase 2 – Project began on November 1<sup>st</sup> which includes camera work to map out the underground drainage system.

(7) Jefferson Avenue/21<sup>st</sup> Avenue Roundabout – Utility relocation is going out for bid and DOTD plans to bid out the work in the first quarter of 2020.

(8) 2019 Gravity Sewer Repairs – Design is 99% complete and the plan is to bid by the end of this month. Several blocks of sewer lines in the downtown area will be repaired under this project. The City has budgeted \$700,000 to address sewer leaks under the streets in downtown Covington.

(9) Street Overlay Project – The contract should be executed in the near future. Portions of the following streets are included in the contract: N. Tyler Street, W. 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Hotel Alley, W. 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, E. 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, E. Guidry Street, W. 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, W. St. Mary and Covington Point Drive.

(j) He commended Aimee Faucheux, Zach Cuny, Mike and Eddie in the Cultural Arts and Events Department for a wonderful Rockin' the Rails concert series, Field of Screams and Trickin' and Treatin' at the Trailhead.

(k) He commended Kelli Moore, our Grant Writer, for the City being awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Lt. Governor's office which will be used towards the construction of the All Abilities Access playground at the Bogue Falaya Park.

**Council Vice President Rolling** requested clarification as to what information the residents will receive after signing up on the website.

**Mayor Johnson** responded that the sign-up form is for residents who wish to be included in the email blast that he intends to send out from time to time.


**Councilman Lewis** commented that after the storm, Public Works did a good job in barricading dangerous areas but it took a day or two to have the trees removed in District A. He inquired as to whether or not the City has a plan to remove the fallen trees.

**Mayor Johnson** responded that trees were down city-wide and the day after the storm, City officials and Public Works' employees were riding around the City assessing the damage and reporting any fallen trees.

2. **Gina Hayes, Director of Administration-  
Chief Administrative Officer Gina Hayes** announced that a surplus sale was held recently and the City received \$26,245.44 in proceeds from the sale.

**Councilman Botsford** congratulated Council Clerk Bonnie Champagne on the birth of her new granddaughter.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.

  
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LARRY ROLLING  
Council Vice President

  
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BONNIE D. CHAMPAGNE  
Council Clerk