

**REGULAR MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, COUNCIL ROOM, AUGUST 1, 2022, 6:30 PM.**

Mayor Steve Horton presided with Mayor Pro-tem Fleeta Baggett, Council members: Susie Keck, Anthony Henderson, Charika Davis, Kenneth Morgan, and Don T. Floyd, City Manager Tres Thomas, Assistant City Manager John King, Deputy Clerk Amanda Huggins, and City Attorney Frank Turner, Jr. present. City Clerk Audra M. Gutierrez was absent.

Mayor Horton gave the invocation and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

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1. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Floyd to approve the minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on July 18, 2022.

Motion carried unanimously.

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A public hearing was held at 6:41 PM concerning annexation, future land use designation, and zoning designation of county parcel located at 233 Williams Road.

2. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the **final** reading of an ordinance for the City of Covington regarding annexation from Newton County, future land use of Industrial (IND), and to zone said property Heavy Industrial (M2), with conditions:

**"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, TO ANNEX TRACTS OF LAND CONTAINING 38.20 ACRES, MORE OR LESS, LOCATED ON WILLIAMS ROAD, IN LAND LOTS 292 AND 293, NINTH LAND DISTRICT, NEWTON COUNTY, INTO THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 2, CHAPTER 36, TITLE 36, OFFICIAL CODE OF GEORGIA ANNOTATED, TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."**

Motion carried unanimously.

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A public hearing was held at 6:50 PM concerning annexation, future land use designation, and zoning designation of county parcel located at Hazelbrand Road.

3. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Davis to approve the **final** reading of an ordinance for the City of Covington regarding annexation from Newton County, future land use of Industrial (IND), and to zone said property Light Industrial (M1), with conditions:

**"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, TO ANNEX TRACTS OF LAND CONTAINING 35.45 ACRES, MORE OR LESS, LOCATED ON HAZELBRAND ROAD, IN LAND LOTS 291 AND 298, NINTH LAND DISTRICT, NEWTON COUNTY, INTO THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 2, CHAPTER 36, TITLE 36, OFFICIAL CODE OF GEORGIA ANNOTATED, TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."**

Motion carried unanimously.

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A discussion ensued regarding the SPLOST Intergovernmental Agreement and clarification of the previous agreement's distribution of proceeds exceeding \$108,000,000.00, should they occur. City Attorney Frank Turner, Jr. gave an update of negotiations with the county.

4. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Keck to approve a version of the SPLOST Intergovernmental Agreement stating 78% county/ 22% municipality distribution for all proceeds based on each individual city's population percentage as stated:

- (1) 73.07% shall be paid to Covington;
- (2) 11.88% shall be paid to Oxford;
- (3) 9.26% shall be paid to Porterdale;
- (4) 3.48% shall be paid to Newborn;
- (5) 2.28% shall be paid to Mansfield; and
- (6) 0.03% shall be paid to Social Circle;

The project list for the city is as follows:

<i>To the <b>CITY OF COVINGTON</b> account for:</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
<i>Road, Street and Bridge projects</i>	<i>\$17,361,860</i>
 <i><u>Total – City of Covington</u></i>	 <i><u>\$17,361,860</u></i>

Motion carried with Council members Keck, Morgan, Davis, and Henderson, voting for. Council members Baggett and Floyd voting against.

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5. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to remove item 15 from the agenda, "Discussion of a resolution regarding the Truist Deposit Account for the Covington Parking Authority."

Motion carried unanimously.

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6. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Davis to approve a license to sell alcoholic beverages for **on-premises consumption** only for:

<b>Island Vibes Grill, Inc.</b>	<b>3116 Hwy 278</b>
<b>Muslelyn's International Restaurant</b>	<b>6129 Hwy 278</b>

Motion carried unanimously.

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7. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Baggett to approve a liability insurance renewal request and premium amount of \$692,812.00 with Traveler's Insurance Company as discussed by Agent Gary Massey.

Motion carried unanimously.

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8. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Baggett to approve the **first** reading of an ordinance for the City of Covington:

"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, TO AMEND THE COVINGTON MUNICIPAL CODE, ENACTED AND ADOPTED ON THE 16<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER, 2001, AS AMENDED BY PREVIOUS AMENDMENTS, TO ALTER CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF TITLE 13 OF THE SAID CODE OF ORDINANCES FOR THE PURPOSE OF **ADOPTING SECTION 13.16.235 (SEWAGE PUMPING STATIONS) OF CHAPTER 13.16 (SEWER SYSTEMS)**, TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

Motion carried with Council members Morgan, Davis, Floyd, and Baggett voting for. Council members Keck and Henderson voting against.

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9. Motion made by Council member Henderson, seconded by Council member Davis to approve the acceptance of the Renewal Energy Customer Agreement with Nisshinbo Automotive Manufacturing, Inc. for a subscription of 8 megawatts per month.

Motion carried unanimously.

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10. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Floyd to approve acceptance of \$115,000.00 allocation of federal funding assistance for Taxiway A2- Pavement Removal at Covington Municipal Airport and matching funds from City of Covington in the amount of \$6,389.00.

Motion carried unanimously.

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A discussion ensued regarding the 2022 millage rate. Financial Director Randy Smith gave a detailed report from the Newton County Tax Commissioner and discussed options with Council.

11. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Baggett to approve the 2022 rollback millage rate.

Motion carried with Council members Davis, Floyd, Baggett and Henderson voting for. Council members Morgan and Keck and voting against.

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A discussion ensued regarding the COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment). Human Resources and Safety Risk Director Paul Dailey gave a detailed report on the status of municipality employee pay rate increases in surrounding areas compared to the City of Covington.

12. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Morgan to approve \$1,179,846.00 COLA increase resulting in a 6% pay increase for all City of Covington employees along with budget amendment resolution.

Motion carried unanimously.

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13. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Morgan to approve a MEAG transfer of funds in the amount of \$1,179,846.00 along with budget amendment resolution.

Motion carried unanimously.

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A detailed discussion ensued regarding the City Manager position amongst Council members. Council member Keck expressed concern of Interim City Manager Tres Thomas in performing two jobs as City Manager and Engineering Director. Council member Keck stated she would like better communication from the City Manager. Mayor Horton encouraged Council to read the City Charter and to allow the process to happen as indicated. Interim City Manager Tres Thomas was questioned if he would like position and he indicated he would. Council member Davis stated she did not see “passion” from Interim City Manager Tres Thomas for the position. Council member Davis further stated she would like to move forward with a wide range search for a City Manager. Council member Floyd stated everyone should be allowed a chance to learn a new job. Council member Floyd further stated he did not understand the rush to fill position as it was agreed upon to have Interim City Manager Tres Thomas serve through December 2022. Council member Morgan stated that the City Manager should have a previous background and experience serving in the position.

Council member Baggett stated the City needs someone in the position who understands Covington, the citizens, and City departments. Council member Henderson stated he expects the City Manager to be available at all times when something needs to be done.

14. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Morgan, to move forward with a professional search for a new City Manager.

Council members Morgan, Davis, and Henderson voting for. Council members Keck, Baggett, and Floyd voting against. Motion **denied** with Mayor Horton voting against, breaking 3 – 3 tie.

15. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Davis to have the City of Covington Human Resources Department move forward with search for candidates to fill the City Manager position.

Motion carried with Council members Keck, Morgan, Davis, and Henderson, voting for. Council members Baggett and Floyd voting against.

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Mr. Jonathan Paschal stated he sent emails to five Council members along with the Mayor and received four responses with a very good response time regarding taxes and was pleased with answers. Mr. Paschal wants the best City employees and we have to pay to get them. Mr. Paschal suggested raising money by opening up Conyers Street and making it a drag strip for racing as speeding in the City of Covington is a huge problem that needs immediate action for a safe city.

Mr. Jefferson passed out a petition to overturn the decision to place “No Parking” signs on Lee Street. Mr. Jefferson stated that many residents knew nothing about the proposal of the signs and that safety and width of the street is not a concern as previously mentioned. Mr. Jefferson pleaded to change the decision and leave Lee Street alone.

Ms. Hawnethia Williams stated there were not enough residents on Lee Street to have two pages of names on the petition Mr. Jefferson presented. Ms. Williams stated the fire department agreed that it is difficult maneuvering on Lee Street. Ms. Williams stated concern for safety is shared with residents of Lee Street, not so much citizens that have businesses there. Ms. Williams stated she hopes Council will not vote to overturn the decision for adding “No Parking” signs.

Ms. Linda Jennings stated she resides at 2207 Lee Street and that on her side of the road there is not an issue with cars parking along the street.

Council member Morgan stated the best decision was to vote for “No Parking” signs on Lee Street and along with Ms. Williams, there is concern about all illegal activity going on there.

Council member Henderson stated he believes in democracy and to leave Lee Street as it is currently in order to work out solution. Council member Henderson stated Assistant Chief Philip Bradford reported no illegal activity on Lee Street.

Council member Floyd would have voted against the “No Parking” signs if he had seen the petition Mr. Jefferson presented as he believed all residents on Lee Street wanted the signs.

Council member Davis questioned how many residents were on Lee Street.

Mr. Jefferson stated there were approximately 11 residents on Lee Street and he tried to contact all of them. Mr. Jefferson stated illegal activity is everywhere and that people deserve to park in front of their own homes.

Council member Baggett stated some houses have no place to park on Lee Street and she believes the signs are to help a congested area.

Chief Stacy Cotton stated the City of Covington is not a small town anymore and there is increased traffic everywhere. Chief Cotton stated streets are not marked properly all over the city and his staff cannot enforce parking issues due to lack of proper signage.

Mayor Steve Horton stated the decision was made to allow parking on one side of the street and to place “No Parking” signs on the east side of Lee Street. Mayor Horton polled Council members on the need for a re-vote regarding the motion to erect “No Parking” signs on the east side of Lee Street approved at the July 18, 2022 Council meeting. Council members Floyd and Henderson stated they would like a re-vote, and Council members Keck, Baggett, Morgan, and Davis stated they would not like a re-vote. The consensus was 4-2 to leave decision as approved.

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Comments from the City Manager and Assistant City Manager:

-Thank you for approving the generous raises on behalf of all staff.

Council member Floyd asked everyone to keep the Turner family in their prayers as Nat Turner, Jr., Frank Turner Sr.’s brother, passed. Mr. Nat Turner Jr. Sr. was a former Mayor for the City of Covington.

Council member Davis questioned the status of the Central Park master plan and timeline. Council member Davis asked if a poll was going to be done for City employees in regards to the necessity for uniforms in order to address uniform budget needs.

City Manager Tres Thomas stated there was a hefty price tag on some items for Central Park and he needs to look at the budget/schedule for the park. City Manager Tres Thomas further stated he will get a poll from City employees on the need for uniforms.

Mayor Steve Horton stated the City uniform contract with Cintas needs reviewing. Mayor Horton further stated Randy Conner was looking for a location for a basketball court that would not conflict with the master plan and the addition of sidewalks if there is enough money.

Council member Morgan questioned if the bench area around Covington Crossings senior living facility is the responsibility of the City or the complex as there are frequent complaints of trash. Council member Morgan asked for an update on the conversation regarding community service workers performing trash pick-up.

City Manager Tres Thomas stated the Facilities Maintenance Manager who oversees the prison detail transferred to the Community Development Department and they are working on a plan.

Council member Keck stated in zoning for NR1, there was lingo regarding accessory buildings cannot be rented and several of them are currently Air B&Bs. Council member Keck further stated several applications are being denied because of the wording and a text amendment is needed. Council member Keck stated the Square needs to be pressure washed and should be routinely washed. Council member Keck questioned if there will be a replanting of magnolia tree on the Square. Council member Keck stated the Cricket Frog Trail pedestrian crossings of at Floyd Conyers Streets are dangerous and suggested placement of rumble strips. Council member Keck complemented the City of Covington logo shirts and stated any City employee out in the community should be wearing one.

City Attorney Frank Turner Jr. stated the language regarding the accessory use buildings has been in the ordinance since 2008 and if you are in NR1 zoning the code says you cannot rent it for gain. City Attorney Frank Turner Jr. stated a text amendment will be required.

Comments from the Mayor:

- NAACP Gala Letter, 75 years in Newton County
- Proclamation for Stephon Castle at August 15, 2022 meeting
- Elija Godwin- Olympic Gold Medalist to be recognized
- Impact Fee Committee needs more nominees
- Newton County Ministers Union Local Feed the Hungry Thanksgiving program volunteers, partners, and sponsorships

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Being no further business meeting adjourned at 9:31 PM.

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Steve Horton, Mayor

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Amanda Huggins, Deputy City Clerk