

**REGULAR MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, COUNCIL ROOM, NOVEMBER 6, 2023, 6:30 PM.**

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

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

Mayor Horton administered the Oath of Office to new CPD Officers Patrick Cordell, Jonathan Blackwell, Joshua Ruiz, and Andrew Gutierrez.

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1. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Morgan to approve the minutes from the regular Council meeting held on October 16, 2023.

Motion carried unanimously.

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2. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve **final** reading of an ordinance for the City of Covington, including amending the future land use classification to IND (Industrial) and zoning to M2:

**"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, TO ANNEX A TRACT OF LAND CONTAINING 16.68 ACRES, LOCATED ON FLAT ROCK ROAD, IN LAND LOT 327, NINTH LAND DISTRICT, NEWTON COUNTY, INTO THE ORPORATE 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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3. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve adding "Discussion of authorizing the Mayor to sign a letter making application to the Georgia Department of Public Safety Office of

Professional Standards for the renewal of the permit for the use of speed detection devices within the City” to the agenda.

Motion carried unanimously.

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Thelma Nolley of 3163 Stone Mountain Street stated the utility bills for last month were not sent or sent late and when she contacted the City she was asked to provide a social security number and date of birth, which is unnecessary. Ms. Nolley stated too many services are being outsourced.

Brad Shelton of 2107 Emory Street stated he and his wife are members of First Baptist Church of Covington and asked Council to fully consider decision made regarding appeal of denial of the Historic Preservation Committee Certificate of Appropriateness for the church. Mr. Shelton thanked Mayor and Council for their service.

Katie Jensen of 2109 Davis Street stated she and her husband have two homes in the historical district of Covington and they hope Council sees benefit of a new sanctuary for First Baptist Church, as many changes have been made to the historical district to benefit the community in the past. Mrs. Jensen stated space is needed for disabled citizens, bathrooms, and to house congregation. Mrs. Jensen stated many neighbors of the church are in agreement with changes.

Hillary Edgar of 8381 Fairway Drive stated she is a member of First Baptist Church and would love for the church to grow together.

Larry McSwain of 35 Glengarry Chase stated he has been a member of the First Baptist Church for thirty years and the building has had several renovations, but it is time to expand. Mr. McSwain stated the new construction will fit well into the historic district.

Dr. Robert Faulkner of 1187 Floyd Street stated he loves his church and has been walking from his house to his church for fifty years. Dr. Faulkner further stated the best solution is to replace the building to serve the needs of the community and congregation.

Mark Anglin of 6147 Indian Creek Circle stated he and his family are members of the First Baptist Church and urge Council to approve a new building for First Baptist Church.

Jennifer Bogle of 7133 Turner Lake Circle stated she has resided at Rainbow Homeless Shelter for three months and it is a blessing to many. Ms. Bogle further stated the negative talk is false regarding the shelter and Pastor Lett. Ms.

Bogle stated she wants to help others because of the help she has received from the shelter, and Mrs. Lett is her angel.

Becky Farmer of 7133 Turner Lake Circle stated she resides at Rainbow Homeless Shelter and she would not be here if the shelter had not helped her along with Pastor Lett and staff. Ms. Farmer further stated she is thankful for the shelter and the dedication of Pastor Lett. Ms. Farmer stated there are rules to be followed that most abide by, and few choose not to. Ms. Farmer stated Pastor Lett needs funds, support, and backing in order to continue the great work she does.

Leslie Habershon of 7133 Turner Lake Circle stated she has resided at the homeless shelter for over a year and everyone takes time to listen and give at the shelter despite staying busy. Ms. Habershon further stated the negative things said about Pastor Lett recently and in the past are not true, and the staff and residents at the shelter are her family. Ms. Habershon stated Mayor and Council should provide any assistance needed to the shelter.

Michelle Foote stated she is a volunteer of Rainbow Homeless Shelter. Ms. Foote stated she has served in many shelters volunteering and this is by far the best. Ms. Foote stated this shelter has beds and three hot meals a day, and it is clean verses other shelters forcing homeless to sleep on the floor with blankets.

Patricia Autry of 7133 Turner Lake Circle stated the homeless shelter is more like a rehab center and very religious. Ms. Autry stated the shelter is secure, safe, structured, and supportive, and we need more places like this.

Cheryl Adams of 7133 Turner Lake Circle stated she came from Macon, GA to get help from a domestic violence situation. Ms. Adams stated Pastor Lett told her she did not accept anyone from Rockdale County but let her stay and has been so good to her. Ms. Adams stated that as long as people follow rules and follow the program they are welcome but some are asked to leave and then start to say negative things about the shelter and Pastor Lett.

Lisa Vanella of 7133 Turner Lake Circle stated she has known Pastor Lett for almost 18 years. Ms. Vanella stated she is a recovering addict and Pastor Lett has always looked after her by bringing her food in camps and by sheltering her for the last two years. Ms. Vanella stated Pastor Lett is loved and helps change lives.

Lindsey Goff of 14045 Brown Bridge Road stated he and his wife are members of First Baptist Church and he loves old things. Mr. Goff stated the accessibility and safety of his church are not compliant for disabled citizens, which imposes concerns for safety.

Matthew Sokolik of 8147 Dearing Street stated he and his family are members of the First Baptist Church and pleads Council to vote in favor of a new building.

Nina Coleman of 40 Valley Court spoke on behalf of Pastor Clara Lett and stated Pastor Lett's husband is very sick yet she stays up late writing requests for grants and cooking full course meals for the homeless. Ms. Coleman stated Pastor Lett is not a thief, and requested Council not take pictures of the shelter and go on rumors of negativity regarding Pastor Lett. Ms. Coleman stated it is not fair to cyber bully the shelter and its services to tear them down. Ms. Coleman invited Council to the shelter to serve.

Steve Henry stated he is a member of First Baptist Church and it is a big reason they are citizens of Covington. Mr. Henry stated his pastor asked the congregation to pray for Mayor and Council and whatever decision is made they are loved and will continue to be prayed for.

Reverend Sharon Collins spoke on behalf of Pastor Clara Lett stating Pastor Lett would like the harassment and disrespect to stop, and she welcomes transparency and accountability from all parties. Reverend Collins stated Pastor Lett asked everyone to not judge by rumors from others, and to get to know her and the work done at the shelter. Reverend Collins stated it could be anyone in the shelter at any time, and we need to all work together.

Willie Davis stated it seems like the homeless shelter becomes a political issue during election season, and asked Council to speak with shelter staff.

Vicki Floyd of 4213 Dorchester Drive stated she and her husband are members of First Baptist Church and the congregation is growing. Mrs. Floyd stated the new building will meet requirements of historic district.

Valerie Hardge stated she is the daughter of Pastor Clara Lett and she has only known her mother to serve and help others. Mrs. Hardge asked that everyone come together to help others.

Jimmy Wilson of 25 Hunters Run stated he is a new member of First Baptist Church and it is extremely crowded. Mr. Wilson stated it is a good solid church and they want to come together as one.

Patricia Wilson of 25 Hunters Run stated she loves this town and First Baptist Church and the family there. Mrs. Wilson stated they need room and urged Council to please listen to the people that came on behalf of the church.

Dawn Atha of 945 Todd Drive stated she is a member of First Baptist Church and churches and homes are two different things, and the church includes thousands of people to consider.

Olinda Ricard-Hodge of 80 Still Waters Drive stated she is embarrassed that the community is behaving the way it is regarding the shelter. Mrs. Ricard-Hodge stated she had to stay at the shelter in 2016 as a victim of domestic violence and there are rules, as there is a small staff managing up to eighty people at a time, including children. Mrs. Ricard-Hodge stated the shelter is a residence and it is disrespectful to come and go taking pictures.

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4. 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>Musulyn's International Restaurant</b>	<b>6129 Hwy 278</b>
<b>Little Phillies South Inc. dba Tubby Tom's</b>	<b>9148 Hwy 278</b>
<b>Three One Four Group, LLC dba Your Pie</b>	<b>1115 Washington St</b>
<b>Longhorn Steakhouse of Covington #5244</b>	<b>6112 Pavilion Way</b>
<b>Osake Covington LLC dba OSAKE</b>	<b>2123 Usher Street, NW</b>
<b>Johnny's New York Style Pizza</b>	<b>10176 Carlin Dr.</b>
<b>Pockets Billiards</b>	<b>6185 Hwy 278</b>
<b>The Depot Sports Bar &amp; Grill</b>	<b>4122 Emory Street, NW</b>

Motion carried unanimously.

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

<b>Alcovy Road Chevron</b>	<b>10176 Alcovy Road</b>
<b>Beverage Mall</b>	<b>7254 Washington St, SW</b>
<b>Himalaya Enterprise, Inc. 21 Package</b>	<b>6147 Hwy 278</b>
<b>The Kroger Company dba Kroger #214</b>	<b>3139 Hwy 278 NE</b>
<b>Covington Raceway</b>	<b>5148 Hwy 278 NW</b>
<b>Kwik Stop</b>	<b>9199 Hwy 278</b>
<b>Hester Package Store</b>	<b>5148 Washington Street</b>
<b>Turner Lake Marathon</b>	<b>6206 Turner Lake Road</b>
<b>Covington Package Store</b>	<b>6138 Jackson Hwy</b>

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 **wholesalers** only for:

**Leon Farmer & Company  
Northeast Sales Dist. Inc.**

**100 Rail Ridge Road, Athens, GA  
840 Ronald Wood Road, Winder, GA**

Motion carried unanimously.

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- 7. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Davis to approve a license to sell alcoholic beverages for **on-premises consumption & off-premises beer/wine only** for:

**Mystic Grill**

**1116 Clark Street**

Motion carried unanimously.

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

**Town Square Olive Oil**

**1124 Monticello Street**

Motion carried unanimously.

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- 9. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Davis to approve a license to sell alcoholic beverages for **on-premises consumption & brewery/brewpub production and sales:**

**Amici CTC LLC dba Amici CTC**

**13500 Town Center Drive**

Motion carried unanimously.

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- 10. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Davis to approve the best bid from Anixter amounting to \$204,775.00 for Post Top Lights submitted by the Electric Department. Bidders included:

Energy Solution	Regency Supply	Techno LED	Irby
Tri-State	Electrical Contractor Incorporated	Gresco	Anixter

Motion carried unanimously.

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11. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Davis to approve the sole bid from Anixter amounting to \$400,140.00 for Single Phase Self-powered Reclosers submitted by the Electric Department.

Motion carried unanimously.

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City Planner Renee Criswell gave a briefing on the Historic Preservation Committee hearing from October 4, 2023 regarding a Certificate of Appropriateness denial for PMAJ23-0007 located at 1139 Usher Street (First Baptist Church). Mayor Horton opened the appeal hearing of the Historic Preservation Committee Certificate of Appropriateness denial for PMAJ23-0007 located at 1139 Usher Street at 7:46 PM. Appellants present to speak included Brandon Bowen of Jenkins, Bowen, & Walker, P.C. and Pastor Cody McNutt of First Baptist Church of Covington.

12. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to **reverse** the Historic Preservation Committee Certificate of Appropriateness denial of the demolition component for PMAJ23-0007 located at 1139 Usher Street.

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

13. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Keck to approve the new construction component regarding the Historic Preservation Committee Certificate of Appropriateness for PMAJ23-0007 located at 1139 Usher Street, with new construction subject to comply with the last revised drawings submitted to staff prior to November 7, 2023, and demolition and new construction to comply with the following conditions:

- Demolition and construction activities involving the exterior of the structure shall be limited to between the hours of 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM. All activities shall be conducted in compliance with the City's noise ordinance.
- During the demolition, FBC will endeavor to preserve, reuse and recycle existing sanctuary features to the greatest extent reasonable. In that regard, a preservation plan will be presented as part of the application for demolition permit. Because it may not be possible to determine whether features are reasonably salvageable and reusable until the

demolition process begins, the City shall appoint a staff member to address preservation, reuse, and recycling questions that arise during the demolition process.

- FBC shall submit a traffic and school pick-up plan to prevent conflict with demolition and construction operations as part of the demolition permit application.
- FBC shall submit a plan for set-up and staging areas as part of the demolition permit application.
- Demolition and construction activities must be clearly marked in compliance with life safety regulations.
- Construction of the new sanctuary will use narrower, reduced-size arched windows as shown on the revised renderings attached hereto.
- Regarding the new sanctuary's façade on Elm Street, the tower feature shall **maintain existing building setbacks on Elm Street** and be no closer to Elm Street than the Elm Street frontage of FBC's existing parking deck. Other features of the new construction along Elm Street shall be stepped back from the tower (away from Elm Street) and landscaped to provide for a more walkable and aesthetically pleasing street frontage.

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

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14. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Floyd to approve an electric power service contract between City of Covington and Archer Aviation Inc.

Motion carried unanimously.

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15. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Davis to approve the MEAG Power Year End Settlement Election for 2024, depositing 100% of the Off-System Energy Sales Margin Settlement into the Municipal Competitive Trust (MCT) Flexible Operating Account, Intermediate Extended Maturity Portfolio, as stated by Electric Director Joel Smith.

Motion carried unanimously.

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16. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Keck to approve the Covington Municipal Airport CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) 2025-2029.

Motion carried unanimously.

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17. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Floyd to appoint Cindy Mask to the Downtown Development Authority to fill expired term of Larry Sullivan.

Motion carried unanimously.

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18. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Morgan to appoint Bess Dobbs to the Downtown Development Authority to fill expired term of Bob Stansfield.

Motion carried unanimously.

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19. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Morgan to table discussion regarding Warming Shelter proposals until November 20, 2023 Council meeting or until a special called meeting before said Council meeting in order to meet with County Manager, Board of Education, and Pastor Clara Lett to determine site of shelter.

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

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20. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Morgan to approve the proposed 2024 City Council meeting calendar.

Council member Floyd abstained from vote.

Motion carried unanimously.

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21. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to authorize the Mayor to sign a letter making applications of the Georgia Department of Public Safety Office of Professional Standards for the renewal of the permit for the use of speed detection devices within the City.

Motion carried unanimously.

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Comments from the City Manager:

- New 911 Communications building proposal - Building Committee met with Board of Governors and a plan was approved October 17, 2023, County Manager Harold Cooper will present to Board of Commissioners, would like authorization to move forward with a request for proposal contingent on other requirements being fulfilled.

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22. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Baggett to add "Discussion of 911 Communications building design request of proposal" to the agenda.

Motion carried unanimously.

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23. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Baggett to approve City Manager Tres Thomas, contingent on County Manager action, to seek design request for proposals for 911 Communications building.

Motion carried unanimously.

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Mayor Horton stated he would like Reverend Willie Davis to speak on behalf of the Newton County Minister's Union regarding the annual Thanksgiving Day feeding program.

Reverend Willie Davis thanked Council for their support and stated last year almost 400 boxes were distributed at Legion Field the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Reverend Davis further stated approximately 150 cooked meals were distributed on Thanksgiving Day, and the goal this year is to distribute 600 boxes to serve a family of four the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Reverend Davis thanked the Retirement Committee as well.

Council member Keck stated tomorrow is Election Day and to go vote to make a difference.

Council member Morgan reiterated Council member Keck.

Council member Baggett stated the election race has been a pleasurable race and that several of the comments made regarding the homeless shelter were

directed at her. Council member Baggett stated she did visit the shelter a few weeks ago and no pictures were taken and she waited until after 8:00 AM to respect privacy. Council member Baggett stated she had never seen a shelter that did not allow people to come in randomly due to transparency and allowing homeless to feel free to come and go. Council member Baggett stated she has not negatively said anything regarding the shelter online and she apologizes if anyone was offended, but she will continue to fight for all citizens.

Council member Davis thanked staff for the paving of roads and sidewalks on the west side of town, as well as updates to crosswalks.

Council member Floyd stated he would like to remind everyone of the Veteran's Day program on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2023 at 11:00 AM on the Square. Council member Floyd stated this is the chance to thank a veteran for their dedicated service and requested all who can to please come. Council member Floyd asked everyone to pray for Israel, and wanted to congratulate new Police Chief Philip Bradford.

Mayor Horton stated a grant writing position has just been filled and requested everyone to please make sure to take care of the Conyers Street Gym and Baker Field. Mayor Horton stated two grants fell through from the Department of Community Affairs for funding regarding housing and requested that the City do the right thing in decision-making.

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Being no further business meeting adjourned at 8:53 PM.

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Steve Horton, Mayor

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Audra M. Gutierrez, City Clerk