

**REGULAR MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF COVINGTON,
GEORGIA, COUNCIL ROOM, DECEMBER 11, 2023, 6:30 PM.**

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

Mayor Horton gave invocation and asked Council member Don Floyd to lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Judge Melanie Bell administered the Oath of Office to Mayor elect Fleeta Baggett, City Council member elect Kim Johnson, City Council member elect Travis Moore, and City Council member elect Jared Rutberg.

Chief Philip Bradford stated Lieutenant Gene Nuqui was present to present the 2023 Fall session graduates of the Covington Police Department's Citizens Academy, and certificates were presented.

1. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Keck to approve the minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on November 20, 2023.

Motion carried unanimously.

2. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Morgan to approve the minutes from the Called Council Meeting held on November 27, 2023.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Morgan to **table** the final reading of an ordinance regarding Impact Fees until the February 5, 2024 Council meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Morgan to add "Discussion of Warming Shelter and bid proposal from Rainbow Homeless Shelter LLC dba Garden of Gethsemane Homeless Shelter" to the agenda.

Motion carried unanimously.

Thelma Nolley of 3163 Stone Mountain Street stated the two streetlights on Stone Mountain Street are still out and it is too dark. Ms. Nolley further stated Commissioner Henderson called her and stated the trash service left trash in his yard, and she instructed him to call the City to begin a work order. Ms. Nolley stated Barbara from the trash service called Commissioner Henderson and told him of a state law saying his trashcan had to be in a certain spot for pickup and she hung up on him without picking up the trash. Ms. Nolley stated the trash service sent out a man to the Commissioner's house unnecessarily and the trash service is doing a terrible job.

Jeff Bishop of 10144 Twin Oaks Drive SW stated he would like the Council to consider the uncontrolled growth when considering setting the impact fee schedule, and to disincentivize unmanageable growth. Mr. Bishop stated the uncontrolled growth is increasing auto insurance rates, taxes, and crime among other things.

Neville Andrews stated he lives in Riverstone Estates and is on the HOA. Mr. Andrews stated the roads are horrible, but patched recently. Mr. Andrews further stated if the roads are left as is they will be worse than before. City Manager Tres Thomas stated the City serves that development with utilities but the roads are the County's responsibility. Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Andrews to leave his contact information in order to get him the appropriate County representative.

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

Island Vibez

3116 Hwy 278

Motion carried unanimously.

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

Pace Street BP
Pure Food Mart
CVS/Pharmacy # 4695
Food Depot # 44
Food To Go
Ingles Markets # 439
Ingles Markets # 452
Nitro 2 Go, LLC
Alcovy Liquor
ALDI # 48

2106 Pace Street
4120 Washington Street
4183 Hwy 278 NE
6169 Hwy 278
6229 Turner Lake Rd
9176 Hwy 278 NE
7173 Turner Lake Road
9135 Martin Luther King Jr Ave.
10117 Alcovy Road
11152 Hwy 142 N

Motion carried unanimously.

7. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve a license to sell alcoholic beverages for **Personal Service Beer and /or Wine** only for:

Tropical Nails Salon

1112 Clark Street

Motion carried unanimously.

8. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson approve the lowest bid amounting to \$716,146.00, as recommended by Ardurra, from JL Walker Construction Company (dba S.H. Creel Contracting LLC) to perform the Dinah Circle water main replacement project.

JL Walker	\$ 716,146.00	Anderson Grading	\$ 902,869.00
RDJE Inc.	\$ 784,895.00	Mid-South	\$ 937,553.00
Helix Grading Utility	\$ 815,138.50	GS Construction	\$ 1,113,606.00
Summit Construction	\$ 846,169.50	Paxton Billingsly	\$ 1,954,361.00

Motion carried unanimously.

9. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the lowest bid not to exceed \$294,610.00 from Ardurra for the Floyd Street and Newton Drive water main replacement design.

Ardurra	Floyd St.	\$134,140.00	Add. Potholes \$1,400.00 each, not to exceed total of \$294,610.00
	Newton Dr.	\$115,670.00	
	Total	\$249,810.00	

Carter and Sloope	Floyd St.	\$271,100.00
	Newton Dr.	\$218,300.00
	Total	\$489,400.00

Motion carried unanimously.

- Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) WaterFirst Program renewal application.

Motion carried unanimously.

- Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the lowest bid amounting to \$137,523.90 from JL Walker Construction Company (dba S.H. Creel Contracting LLC) for the Stalling Street Stormwater Rehabilitation Project to repair stormwater infrastructure and damaged roadway.

A&S Paving	\$ 142,245.00
Blount Construction	\$ 174,794.64
Paxton Billingsley	\$ 198,835.00
Jackie Walker Construction dba S.H. Creel Construction	\$ 137,523.90

Motion carried unanimously.

- Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve a resolution extending a limited moratorium on the acceptance of zoning petitions and applications for preliminary plats and special use permits for residential development until February 5, 2024.

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

Deputy City Manager John King left meeting at 7:08 PM and returned at 7:11 PM.

City Clerk Audra Gutierrez left meeting at 7:09 PM and returned at 7:12 PM.

Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson gave a detailed report and recommendations from staff and Planning Commission regarding proposed text amendments to Title 16 Code of Ordinances as it relates to allowable densities. A public hearing was opened at 7:27 PM. Charles Tuller of 715 Flat Rock Road was present to speak against, stated this has happened too quickly, and someone needs to form a committee to provide input while allowing the public to provide more input as well.

10. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Henderson to table the **first** reading of an ordinance amending Chapter 16 with regards to Building Typology and Density until the January 16, 2024 Council meeting:

Motion carried unanimously.

11. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Keck to approve extending the service hours of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption one hour (until 1:00 AM) on New Year's Eve/New Year's morning.

Motion carried unanimously.

12. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Baggett to approve appointing Lee M. Mayfield to the Planning Commission.

Motion carried unanimously.

13. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Floyd to approve consolidation of the Flock Camera agreement, along with request for five more cameras.

Motion carried unanimously.

14. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Morgan, to approve request to purchase two transformers for Archer Aviation by the Electric Department amounting to \$192,500.00.

Motion carried unanimously.

15. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Floyd to approve Covington Municipal Airport property and liability insurance renewal as presented by Gary Massey Agency Inc. with a renewal date of December 31, 2023 and expiration date of December 31, 2024. This includes a second installment of a three-year liability renewal with Chubb amounting to \$12,937.00 and property renewal with Travelers amounting to \$17,380.00.

Motion carried unanimously.

16. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Floyd to approve the lowest bid amounting to \$22,237,500.00, as recommended by Carter & Sloope, from Lakeshore Engineering, LLC, for improvements at the Water Reclamation Facility.

Lakeshore Engineering, LLC	\$ 22,237,500.00
Reeves Young, LLC	\$ 22,940,000.00
IHC Construction Companies, LLC	\$ 25,941,800.00

Motion carried unanimously.

A discussion ensued regarding a request by the Community Development department for the addition of a Special Events Coordinator position to its current staff, along with a budget adjustment resolution. Community Development Director Ken Malcom stated Condrey rated the position as a Special Events Specialist, and he learned just before the meeting a copy of the job description was not presented to Mayor and Council. Council member Davis stated she was not comfortable voting on the position without a job description.

17. Motion made by Council member Floyd to approve request by the Community Development department for the addition of a Special Events Coordinator position to its current staff, along with budget adjustment resolution.

Motion **dies** for lack of a second.

18. Motion made by Council member Baggett, seconded by Council member Davis to **table** discussion of request by the Community Development department for the addition of a Special Events Coordinator position to its current staff, along with budget adjustment resolution until the January 2, 2024 Council meeting.

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

A discussion ensued regarding a warming shelter and a bid proposal from Rainbow Community Center, Inc. dba Garden of Gethsemane Homeless Shelter. City Manager Tres Thomas stated he did not receive the proposal until 2:30 PM today. Mr. Thomas further stated the homeless shelter has unofficially been accepting unsheltered community members to stay when outside temperatures drop. Mr. Thomas stated he would like to request a sign-in sheet of the participants that utilized the shelter along with the county they normally reside in, but according to the bid proposal, this is against HIPPA and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) laws. City Attorney Frank Turner, Jr. stated he is not aware of the laws, but he would check into the matter.

19. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Morgan to approve to reject previous bids/request for proposals submitted for 2023/2024 warming shelter, waive the City of Covington Purchasing Policy, and accept the request for proposal submitted by the Rainbow Community Center, Inc. dba Garden of Gethsemane Homeless Shelter on December 11, 2023 to the City Manager, with conditions:

- A bi-monthly report in an Excel spreadsheet showing expenses to compare to contract
- An account/list of participants of the warming shelter and where they are from to track for public safety purposes that does not violate any laws or policies

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

The Mayor and Council acknowledged receipt of the City Manager appointments for 2024:

John King - Deputy City Manager

Audra Gutierrez - City Clerk

Cheryl Freeman – City Solicitor

Philip Bradford - Police Chief to maintain a force of at least 50 sworn officers

Bobby Johnson - IT Director

Judy Johnson - Planning and Zoning Director

Mike Jewell - Gas Director

Joel Smith - Electric Director

Lee Harvey - Public Works Director
Kevin Sorrow - Water Resources Director
Joe Doss - Fire Chief
Paul Dailey - Human Resource Director
Trudy Henry - E911 Director
Randy Smith - Finance Director
Ken Malcom - Community Development Director

Comments from the City Manager:

- As a graduate of the Citizens Academy, it was a great time and experience; Lt. Nuqui, Lt. Cain, and all other officers involved do great job, it was enlightening, entertaining and highly recommended for citizens interested
- Tentatively scheduled one-day retreat for Mayor and Council with Georgia Municipal Association in February 2024 in order to cover roles and responsibilities of Council while also reviewing and making updates to the Strategic Plan approved earlier in 2023, more to come, original date discussed of February 13, 2024 already scheduled with Retirement Committee
- Pleasure working with Council members Morgan and Floyd, as well as Mayor Horton last eighteen months, Best Wishes and God bless

Deputy City Manager John King stated everyone should have received Bi-centennial Challenge Coin, thanks to Bailey Dickinson for heading the project and the design of the coins, great job.

Council member Keck stated she would like an update on the Square fire property, and stated two retention ponds at Town Center appeared stagnant. Council member Keck further stated she would like an update on the planting of trees at Exit 92, and it has been a pleasure working with Council members Morgan and Floyd. Council member Keck stated she expects big things from Mayor Elect Baggett, and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. Council member Keck stated Mayor Horton has been a great Mayor, and wishes him great health and retirement.

Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson stated demolition permits have been obtained by Britt Smith and Levy Maddox for the property destroyed by fire on the Square for the end buildings, but no permit has been obtained for the center buildings.

Deputy City Manager John King stated the planting of the trees at Exit 92 started today as GDOT delivered the permits last week.

Council member Morgan stated some City employees asked him to ask Mayor and Council to consider a benefit package for employees who have worked at the City for 30 years or more and that the insurance premium would be paid in full until they reach age 62. Council member Morgan stated he has enjoyed his time with the City, nineteen years as a full time employee and eight years as a City Council member. Council member Morgan further stated he wishes everyone the best, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and God bless. Council member Morgan stated he will be back, holding the accountable accountable.

Council member Baggett stated it is an honor to serve this community as Mayor and is humbled by the outpouring of support from everyone. Council member Baggett further stated she has had a gracious opponent and friend in Council member Morgan and learned much from him. Council member Baggett stated she could not have had a better person to sit beside and learn from than Mayor Horton as well, and thanked Council member Floyd and his wife. Council member Baggett stated the problem with the homeless shelter is how the money is handled, nothing more, and hopes something can be worked out. Council member Baggett further stated the Christmas parade was the best she had ever seen and thanked staff for all the hard work.

Council member Davis stated it has been a pleasure to work with and learn from Council members Floyd and Morgan, as well as Mayor Horton. Council member Davis further stated being a rookie is no fun but they have been great role models and a positive example. Council member Davis stated it would be great to know when the lights on Stone Mountain Street will be fixed, and believes the rules and procedures stating citizens and visitors may not have food or drink (including water) is not friendly. Council member Davis further stated she got complaints on stormwater fees potentially going up due to impact fees and would like to see them reduced or possibly eliminated.

Council member Floyd stated it has been a privilege to serve on City Council with everyone as well as forty years with the Fire Department, three years with volunteer Fire Department. Council member Floyd stated he hopes he has made a positive impact, and gave a special thanks to Mayor Horton. Council member Floyd further stated he hopes the new Council members read the Charter and fully understand duties. Council member Floyd stated the City Manager runs the City and should be allowed to do so, and City department heads need to be allowed to run their departments. Council member Floyd stated he would like to know how the dust from the First Baptist Church demolition will be contained,

and thanked everyone for allowing him to serve on Council. Council member Floyd stated anyone may call him anytime.

Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson stated there were conditions placed on the rezoning passed for the First Baptist Church to ensure a managed site, including during demolition.

Council member Henderson stated he wished Brother Morgan, Brother Floyd, and Mayor Horton the best and thanked them for their service. Council member Henderson stated he would like an update from the City Manager on the streetlights on Stone Mountain Street.

City Manager Tres Thomas stated he looked at the area on Stone Mountain Street again the night before the meeting and one of the challenges is the parcel is private property that is not lit well. The lights at Kingdom Connections Church were rented, but were taken down at the request of the property owner. Mr. Thomas stated other options are to put trail lighting on the trail or to place another pole. Mr. Thomas stated he is working with the Electric Director on this.

Mayor Horton stated he wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and to remember the true meaning of what Christmas is about, the gift of our Lord. Mayor Horton wanted to thank all of the citizens of Covington to allow him to serve the last four years and it was an honor. Mayor Horton further stated he was thankful for all of the Council members, City Attorney, and staff he has served with. Mayor Horton requested Council to support staff and the City Manager, as they are great. Mayor Horton wanted to leave a few words to live by:

- Always do the right thing even when nobody is looking.
- Always put people first because there is no excuse not to.
- If, at all possible, don't make long term decisions on short term observations. It lets you down in most cases.
- Apply mercy over justice whenever possible, that is what you would want too.
- Be an attentive listener. Come back if you don't have time in the moment to listen well.

Being no further business meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Steve Horton, Mayor

Audra M. Gutierrez, City Clerk

