

**REGULAR MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, COUNCIL ROOM, MARCH 4, 2024, 6:30 PM.**

Mayor Fleeta Baggett presided with Mayor Pro-tem Susie Keck, Council members: Anthony Henderson, Charika Davis, Kimberly Johnson, Travis Moore, and Jared Rutberg, 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.

Dr. Royeese Stowe gave the invocation.

Mayor Baggett led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Mayor Baggett read a proclamation from Governor Brian Kemp recognizing Natural Gas Utility Workers Day.

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1. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on February 19, 2024.

Motion carried unanimously.

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2. Motion made by Council member Henderson, seconded by Council member Moore to approve the **final** 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 PROVISION OF TITLE 5 OF THE SAID CODE OF ORDINANCES FOR THE PURPOSE OF AMENDING SECTION 5.12.310 (COVINGTON HISTORIC DOWNTOWN ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT) OF CHAPTER 5.12 (ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES) THEREOF,** TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.”

Motion carried unanimously.

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3. Motion made by Council member Henderson, seconded by Council member Moore to approve the **final** reading of an ordinance for the City of Covington for annexation from Newton County to the City of Covington, 3.4 acres of a 6.1 acre-

tract of tax parcel C062 018 at (10111) Old Atlanta Hwy by Tammy Beatty with Metro RV LLC., and reaffirming the Future Land Use designation to IND (Industrial), the zoning of the property to M1 (Light Industrial) and granting approval of a variance to the acreage requirement of 16.20.610.C to allow the 6.1-acre tract to be utilized for RV parking:

**"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, TO ANNEX A TRACT OF LAND CONTAINING 3.41 ACRES, LOCATED ON OLD ATLANTA HIGHWAY, IN LAND LOT 192, TENTH 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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4. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve a request by Bethlehem Baptist Church to rename part of Usher Street NW to Bethlehem Way NW, with resolution.

Motion carried unanimously.

Sherriff Ezell Brown and Pastor Ronnie Thomas were present on behalf of Bethlehem Baptist Church to express gratitude for approving the resolution to rename part of Usher Street NW to Bethlehem Way NW.

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5. Motion made by Council member Rutberg, seconded by Council member Davis to approve initiating a text amendment to Title 5 – Business Licenses and Regulations, Chapter 5.44 – Mobile Food Vendors, in regards to requiring all business licenses to come from the Planning and Development office.

Motion carried unanimously.

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6. Motion made by Council member Rutberg, seconded by Council member Davis to approve initiating a text amendment to Chapter 16.44 –Parking & Loading, Section 16.44.010 – Off-street automobile parking spaces (and other sections applicable to the goal which may include Sec. 15.44.040) in regards to language clean up concerning residential areas of where a pull-behind trailer, recreational vehicle and commercial vehicles parking relate to home occupations.

Motion carried with Council members Keck, Johnson, Moore, Davis, and Rutberg voting in favor. Council member Henderson voting against.

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7. Motion made by Council member Moore, seconded by Council member Johnson to approve the final plat for Wildwood Subdivision Phase 2B.

Motion carried unanimously.

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8. Motion made by Council member Henderson, seconded by Council member Rutberg to approve the sole bid from The Arts Association of Newton County in partnering with the City of Covington to provide the Annual Concert Series, beginning in 2024, and to continue for up to three years with one-year renewals unless terminated by either party. The Arts Association of Newton County shall match the City of Covington's commitment of \$60,000.00 to fund the concert series through sponsorships.

Motion carried unanimously.

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9. Motion made by Council member Johnson, seconded by Council member Moore to approve the sole bid to purchase a right-of-way chipper truck from Altec amounting to \$168,149.00 to be included in the FY2024/2025 budget.

Motion carried unanimously.

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10. Motion made by Council member Henderson, seconded by Council member Johnson to approve the Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement with Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS).

Motion carried unanimously.

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11. Motion made by Council member Rutberg, seconded by Council member Johnson to nominate Deputy City Manager John King to serve as voting delegate for Consideration of Three Statewide Georgia Opioid Settlement Advisory Commission Members (GOSAC) and Regional Advisory Council (RAC) members.

Motion carried unanimously.

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Thelma Nolley of 3163 Stone Mountain Street stated a comment was made at the previous Council meeting regarding cleaning up the City and calling it "Thelma's Law". Ms. Nolley stated she has been receiving phone calls about it and wants it put on sanitation or Mayor and Council, as she is not the one putting Code Enforcement on anyone. Ms. Nolley stated there were good people working for sanitation before the City turned services over to Barbara and Bobby. Mayor Baggett stated calling out of names is not tolerated. Ms. Nolley stated she will call people by name, and stated it is not fair to her that people are calling her about Code Enforcement getting on to them. Ms. Nolley stated the City was, and still is, nasty.

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Comments from the City Manager:

- Looking forward to the GMA Retreat tomorrow, March 5, 2023, light breakfast to be served beginning at 9:00 AM along with lunch

Council member Henderson stated he would like to tag on to the comment by Ms. Nolley to be mindful of how things are said, especially regarding Code Enforcement, as he has been in a similar situation. Council member Henderson further stated there was a church on Jackson Hwy that accused him of calling Code Enforcement on them when he did not, and comments regarding Code Enforcement matters should be taken seriously.

Council member Rutberg stated he would like staff to look at the Google Maps routing of Washington Street and Monticello Street as there are still some large trucks coming through and making a left turn instead of going around. Council member Rutberg further stated he would like an update regarding the fencing on Monticello Street. Council member Rutberg thanked Mayor Baggett and City Manager Tres Thomas for the letter written in support of a traffic light on the Bypass in front of the STEM Academy. Council member Rutberg stated he spoke with Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson and Planning Commission Acting Chair Shawn McGovern regarding including further explanation on why Planning Commission members vote for or against items presented to Council. Council member Rutberg thanked City Manager Tres Thomas, Community Development Director Ken Malcom, and Chief Philip Bradford for quick response times to questions through the week.

Mayor Baggett stated the City is currently in use of a fourth engineer to inspect the burned buildings due to the dangerous conditions and all have recommended the placement of the fencing be at their current location for the safety of everyone in case the buildings fall in.

Council member Davis stated she would like to know if fiber optics are available in the Sandhill Community, as a citizen was unable to connect with his physician for a Zoom post-op appointment. Council member Davis further stated the citizen called AT&T who notified him the Sandhill area has the lowest internet package in the City since the City has not allowed the needed fiber optics for high-speed internet. Council member Davis stated everyone in the City should have high-speed internet.

Mayor Baggett stated the bandwidth and internet speed depend on what someone pays for, and each band is required to have a certain amount of people to utilize the line. Mayor Baggett further stated the City has no control over where AT&T places lines.

Council member Davis stated she would like the City to install fiber in the Texas Alley/Sandhill area.

City Manager Tres Thomas stated he will look into the matter and report back.

Council member Davis stated someone in Harristown received charges for utilities with no occupancy and a citizen in Oxford complained about utilities being very high. Council member Davis questioned if electric scooters are allowed on the trails, as there have been incidences of teenagers riding them.

Mayor Baggett stated she believes electric scooters are not allowed on the trails.

Council member Davis requested monitoring of electric scooters on the trails before someone gets hurt.

Council member Moore stated he would like to commend Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson and the Code Enforcement team of Danny Bartello and Freda Holloway for the new Code Enforcement Guide for our citizens.

Council member Johnson stated she would like to congratulate Community Development Director Ken Malcom for receiving the Visionary City Award.

Mayor Baggett apologized to Ms. Thelma Nolley, and stated she was only trying to address Ms. Nolley's concerns regarding how she felt the west side of the City was not being held accountable by Code Enforcement. Mayor Baggett further stated she had spoken with Code Enforcement to address the concerns and it had nothing to do with sanitation or singling out anyone, and jokingly used "Thelma's Law" to refer to the process. Mayor Baggett apologized for any inconvenience and trouble her statement caused, and anyone can contact her anytime for concerns and issues. Mayor Baggett stated the Water/Sewer department did an excellent job repairing the watermain break on the Square as

she observed the work for a time. Mayor Baggett further stated Crossover Day was February 29, 2024 at the Georgia State Capital. Mayor Baggett stated and House Bill 1207, which allows the ability to look at ballots before they are printed or loaded, crossed over to the Senate. Mayor Baggett urged everyone to speak with Senators to make sure this bill passes. Mayor Baggett stated March is National Linemen Month and asked everyone to thank a lineman, as our utility workers keep the City running. Mayor Baggett reminded Council the Council Retreat is tomorrow, March 5, 2024 beginning at 9:00 AM. Council member Henderson and Council member Davis stated they will not be in attendance due to their jobs. Mayor Baggett urged Council to attend retreat and be present, as holding office is a job that requires Council members to be informed and participate.

Council member Davis left meeting at 7:37 PM.

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Being no further business meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM.

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Fleeta S. Baggett, Mayor

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Audra M. Gutierrez, City Clerk