

REGULAR MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, COUNCIL ROOM, JULY 1, 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 gave invocation and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Avis Williams stated Sandhill-Texas Alley Day will be held on September 14, 2024 from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the corner of Walnut and West Streets, and lunch will be catered at noon. Ms. Williams further stated there will be parking at Grace United Methodist Church and at the Washington Street Community Center, and a memorial service will be held for those that were lost in the last two years. Ms. Williams explained this event is held every two years as several hundred travel from all over to attend. Ms. Williams stated there is a nominal cost of \$35.00 per individual attending and invited everyone to the event. Mayor Baggett asked Ms. Williams to give an address to the Mayor and Council as well as Downtown and Tourism Development for citizens to contribute donations if desired.

1. Motion made by Council member Rutberg, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on June 17, 2024.

Motion carried unanimously.

Council member Moore requested the addition of "7a" to the agenda, "Discussion of the initiation of a text amendment to Section 16.20.135 – Breweries, Brewpubs, and Distilleries", attempting to align more with the business model for said establishments.

2. Motion made by Council member Moore, seconded by Council member Rutberg to add item 7a to the agenda, "Discussion of the initiation of a text amendment to Section 16.20.135 – Breweries, Brewpubs, and Distilleries."

Motion carried unanimously.

3. Motion made by Council member Henderson, seconded by Council member Johnson to approve request for qualifications from American Tank Maintenance amounting to \$24,020.08 per month, as recommended by consultant GWES (Georgia Water and Environmental Services) Engineering, for the annual water tank maintenance program.

Utility Service Group Water Solutions
UTV Utilivison Inc.
American Tank Maintenance

Motion carried unanimously.

A discussion ensued regarding a request by Council member Rutberg to provide discounted fees for citizens and businesses within in the city or in Newton County, as well as employees of the city, to rent Legion Field. Council member Rutberg presented a spreadsheet with proposed options categorized into three tiers. Council member Rutberg stated proof of residence would be required using a driver's license, and proof of business location verified by business license. Council member Rutberg further stated that re-evaluation would occur after one year of implementation. Mayor Baggett stated it would be a mistake to not make the deposits very large to encourage efficient care and cleanup after events. Downtown and Tourism Development Director Ken Malcom stated currently the deposit amount is the same as the rental fee. Council member Rutberg stated he is fine with changing any of the proposed fees, as his main concern is the discount to local citizens. Mr. Malcom stated seventy percent of inquiries to rent Legion Field decline after discovering unaffordable fees. Council member Keck asked Mr. Malcom about revenue over the last year. Mr. Malcom stated most rentals were to Newton County organizations, but there was less revenue from tier one. Mr. Malcom believes if proposed discounts are applied, the volume of rentals will increase tremendously. Council member Henderson questioned if discounted rates would be advertised, as residents and businesses outside of the County may use connections within the County to rent the facility. Council member Rutberg suggested only advertising non-discounted rates. Council member Keck asked the cost of running Legion Field last year. Mr. Malcom stated he was not certain of utility cost, but to-date rental fee collection amounts to \$26,000.00. Council member Rutberg stated with the proposed fees, parking for filming crews would increase from \$13,000.00 to \$32,000.00. Council member Keck would like a review of the numbers after six months of the fee change. Mr. Malcom reiterated that for-profit events are not allowed at Legion Field. City Attorney Frank Turner Jr. recommended changing Tier "C" verbiage from "public/private" to "non-profits" with greater than 500 attendees for

events. Mr. Malcom stated current policy does not allow ticketed for-profit events. Mr. Turner suggested Tier “C” only read “events greater than 500 attendees”. Mayor Baggett reiterated she recommends a higher deposit fee, especially for the pavilion. Council member Rutberg discussed changes requested by Mayor and Council, and the fee spreadsheet was adjusted according to recommendations.

4. Motion made by Council member Rutberg, seconded by Council member Johnson to approve the new Legion Field rental fee schedule, effective July 1, 2024, as discussed.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. Motion made by Council member Johnson, seconded by Council member Moore to approve a sixty-day extension of the current contract with Georgia Waste Systems, LLC (Waste Management) to finalize the contract as requested by Public Works Director Lee Harvey.

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

6. Motion made by Council member Moore, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the initiation of a text amendment to Section 16.20.135 – Breweries, Brewpubs, and Distilleries.

Motion carried unanimously.

Comments from the City Manager:

- 4th of July Celebration on the Square this Thursday, traffic blocked off beginning at 2:00 PM, two live bands to perform between 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, fireworks to begin at 9:45 PM
- Thanks to Street Department for great job cleaning up Exit 92, working with GDOT regarding a maintenance agreement

Council member Henderson questioned if golf carts are allowed to cross a state highway.

City Attorney Frank Turner, Jr. stated golf carts are allowed to cross state highways, but not travel on them.

Council member Rutberg questioned if there were golf cart inspections being performed at the Covington Police Department annex. Council member Rutberg stated he sent notes taken at the last 501C6 meeting with Downtown and Tourism Development to Mayor and Council. Council member Rutberg further stated he will be wearing a Captain America costume in the 4th of July parade and he is looking forward to the festivities.

Chief Philip Bradford stated that golf cart inspections are being performed at the Covington Police Department annex, an officer can come to homes and offices to perform inspections, and payments can only be taken at the annex. Chief Bradford further stated citizens can call the non-emergency line at 911 for information.

Council member Davis requested someone to look at the streetlight at 4222 Carroll Street and requested an update on the Dinah Pace watermain replacement project as well as the Nelson Heights sidewalks. Council member Davis thanked Beth Ivey with Marketing and Multimedia Design, the Transportation Department, and Transportation Manager John Hendrix for assisting with the Sandhill Community cleanup.

City Manager Tres Thomas stated all the water services at Dinah Pace have been transferred over to the new watermain, and the project is 90% complete. Mr. Thomas thanked the Water/Sewer department for their great work. Mr. Thomas stated he has attempted to reach out to the original engineer regarding the easement adjustments for the Nelson Heights sidewalks, who has not responded, and the city will continue to pursue contact. Mr. Thomas further stated if contact cannot be made, another survey firm will be consulted, and once that is done the project will be ready to go.

Council member Moore stated the pond at Academy Springs Park has been drained to treat the algae and over the next month special cleaning will take place. Council member Moore thanked Facilities Maintenance Manager Luther Bouchillon and his crew as well as Deputy City Manager John King and the Water/Sewer department for their assistance with this project. Council member Moore acknowledged and thanked Senior Engineering Technician Michael Geiger and Engineering Manager Mike Willis with assistance at a citizen's house off Floyd Street regarding water runoff from the trail. Council member Moore thanked Public Works Director Lee Harvey and Facilities & Permit Specialist Dara Penland for assisting with recycling at Legion Field. Council member Moore stated blue recycling containers will be available on Wednesday, July 3, 2024 and Latham will be providing pick up at no charge.

Council member Johnson stated in an effort clean up much of the west side of town and make aesthetically pleasing, she noticed a shopping cart at the Turner

Lake Rd roundabout that needs to be removed, and tires have been dumped at the right-of-way on Pinecrest Drive. Council member Johnson further stated 3154 Lunsford Circle appears to be abandoned and dangerous.

Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson stated she will investigate the property at 3154 Lunsford Circle.

Council member Keck stated she learned a great deal about abandoned properties at the Georgia Municipal Association Convention in Savannah, and taking care of abandoned properties on the west side will offer huge improvements. Council member Keck thanked Latham Sanitation for picking up large amounts of trash from rental houses built beside her neighborhood.

Mayor Baggett stated extra guests will be in town this week for our 4th of July celebration and asked everyone to watch social media for weather updates in case of possible cancellations if needed. Mayor Baggett asked everyone to stay hydrated, be mindful of the heat, and to continue to make all efforts to conserve water. Mayor Baggett reviewed the Georgia Law regarding protection of whistleblowers and shared the number to call to confidentially report government abuse matters, 404-656-7924.

7. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Keck to enter into Executive Session at 7:33 PM for the purpose of discussing land and pending litigation.

Motion carried unanimously.

Council member Henderson left at 7:40 PM and returned at 7:42 PM.

8. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Davis to enter into Regular Session at 8:04 PM.

Motion carried unanimously.

9. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the termination of the contract to purchase 3156 Spring Street.

Motion carried unanimously.

10. Motion made by Council member Rutberg, seconded by Council member Johnson to begin the re-zoning process of two parcels known as CO80007J and the southern portion of CO80007 from M2 (Heavy Industrial) to CM (Corridor Mixed-Use).

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

Being no further business meeting adjourned at 8:09 PM.

Fleeta Baggett, Mayor

Audra M. Gutierrez, City Clerk