



**REGULAR MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, JANUARY 5, 2026, 6:30 PM.**

Mayor Fleeta Baggett presided with Mayor Pro-tem Kimberly Johnson, Council Members: Dwayne Turner, Anthony Henderson, Jared Rutberg, Charika Davis, and Travis Moore, City Manager Tres Thomas, Deputy City Manager John King, City Clerk Audra M. Gutierrez, and Attorney Frank Turner, Jr.

Reverend 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 administered the Oath of Office to new Covington Police Officer Phillip Jean-Louis.

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1. Motion made by Council Member Henderson, seconded by Council Member Rutberg to approve the minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on December 15, 2025.

Motion carried unanimously.

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2. Motion made by Council Member Rutberg, seconded by Council Member Davis to amend the agenda to add a discussion of moratorium for Data Centers.

Motion carried unanimously.

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3. Motion made by Council Member Henderson, seconded by Council Member Turner to implement a 180-day moratorium for Data Center permits.

Motion carried unanimously.

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4. Motion made by Council Member Henderson, seconded by Council Member Davis to initiate a text amendment regarding Data Centers.

Motion carried unanimously.

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5. Motion was made by Council Member Davis, seconded by Council Member Henderson to approve application to GDOT for the 2026 Local Maintenance Improvement Grant.

Motion carried unanimously.

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6. Motion made by Council Member Henderson, seconded by Council Member Johnson to approve appointing David Barre to the Tree Board.

Motion carried unanimously.

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7. Motion was made by Council Member Davis, seconded by Council Member Moore to approve participation in Discover Card Merchant Class Action Settlement.

Motion carried unanimously.

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8. Motion was made by Council Member Henderson, seconded by Council Member Turner to approve Miscellaneous Appointments for 2026:

-Frank Turner, Jr. as City Attorney (with assistance from Strickland & Turner, LLP if needed)

-Qader A. Baig as Municipal Court Judge (2-year term)

-Piedmont Physicians as City Physicians

Motion carried unanimously.

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9. Motion was made by Council Member Davis, seconded by Council Member Henderson to appoint Council member Rutberg as Mayor Pro-tem for 2026.

Motion carried unanimously.

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10. Motion was made by Council Member Henderson, seconded by Council Member Turner to appoint Council member Davis as Mayor Pro-tem Elect for 2026.

Motion carried unanimously.

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11. Motion was made by Council Member Henderson, seconded by Council Member Rutberg to approve Change Order 3 with exception of possible installation of concrete in turn-around area if it is found to be more cost effective

Motion carried unanimously.

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Ms. Barbara Morgan informed everyone that the Warming Shelter does not need additional blankets or socks. They do need bottled water, coffee, creamer, sugar, cups etc., as well as vinyl covered pillows. She encouraged everyone to donate these items if possible.

Council member Henderson left the meeting 7:08 PM.

Ms. Thelma Nolley began by questioning City Manager Tres Thomas about the ethnicity of recent appointees and hires. The Mayor reminded Ms. Nolley of the rules prohibiting the discussion of personnel in a public forum and invited her to schedule a meeting with the City Manager or Deputy Manager for concerns with personnel.

Ms. Nolley questioned why not everyone that donated turkeys received thanks at a previous meeting and why Council Member Johnson delivered one thank you. The Mayor explained that a list of donations was not provided nor was Council Member Johnson invited to be part of the activities. She expressed gratitude to all unnamed donors.

Ms. Nolley expressed her concern for future Data Centers that may be interested in her neighborhood. And asked why traffic is being detoured toward her street from Emory Street bridge repair. The Mayor explained that the bridge repair is not a City but a DOT project and these concerns should be directed to DOT.

Ric Jarvis thanked the Citizens of Covington for their outpouring of support and hospitality to garbage collectors during the holiday season. Their gratitude was overwhelming.

Council member Henderson returned to the meeting 7:15 PM

Jacob De La Rosa expressed a dislike of having any Data Centers in Covington but was pleased to hear earlier in the meeting that steps are being considered for zoning and provisions to try to limit any negative exposure and impact to citizens and neighborhoods.

Rosie Crawford reminded council members that they represent the people and taxpayers. That decisions should be made in citizens' best interest.

The City Manager hoped everyone has a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He commended the work of Pashion Wilson, John Hendrix and consultant Ben Pierce for successfully receiving a \$240,000.00 Safe Roads Grant. He again reminded council of the retreat January 29<sup>th</sup>, 9AM-4PM, at the Covington Municipal Airport.

The Deputy City Manager wished everyone a Happy New Year.

The Special Projects Supervisor wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Council Member Henderson wished everyone a Happy New Year he looks forward to serving on the board this year. He did a third-party survey with limited participation. The

top three concerns of those that replied was property tax, road & street maintenance, and property standards. He will share more details later.

Council Member Rutberg wished everyone a Happy New Year. He welcomed new Council Member Turner. Thanked John Hendrix for all of the projects he's working on pointing out that there are currently four projects on the east side of the city and six projects on the west side of the city.

Council Member Moore wanted to put Ms. Nolley's data center worries at ease, explaining that the proposed considerations should protect residential areas.

Council Member Johnson wished everyone a Happy New Year. She welcomed new Council Member Turner and thanked Mayor Baggett for doing a fantastic job with cities newest endeavor.

Council Member Turner wished everyone a Happy New Year. He thanked Tres Thomas, fellow council members and others for assistance with his transition into his council seat. He would like to encourage citizens to voice their opinions regarding data centers at either the Planning Commissions public hearing or the City Councils public hearing and not just on Facebook.

Mayor Fleeta Baggett commended the Covington Fire Department for extinguishing the large Michelin fire this past week. She asks that everyone keeps Officer Henry and his family in your prayers. She invited everyone to join her at the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration on January 8<sup>th</sup> at 3PM in the auditorium. She expressed a heavy heart with Ms. Nolley's words, emphasizing that the City of Covington hires, promotes and appoints on earned merit alone and welcomes anyone concerned to schedule a meeting with the city manager or deputy manager.

Council Member Davis After checking; confirmed the MLK Celebration is at the Newton High School Auditorium.

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Being no further business meeting, the meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.

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Fleeta S. Baggett, Mayor

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Audra M. Gutierrez, City Clerk