

**REGULAR MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF COVINGTON, GEORGIA, COUNCIL ROOM, JULY 5, 2022, 6:33 PM.**

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

Associate Pastor Avis Williams of Bethlehem Baptist Church gave the invocation and informed everyone of upcoming Sandhill/Texas Alley Reunion scheduled for September 10, 2022 at the corner of West Street and Walnut Street.

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

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1. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Morgan to approve the minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on June 21, 2022.

Motion carried unanimously.

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2. Motion made by Council member Baggett, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve **final** reading of proposed Charter Amendment to Sections 2.08 and 6.02, budget provisions:

“AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 2.08 AND SECTION 6.02 OF THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON; TO REPEAL ALL OTHER ACTS AND ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.”

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

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3. Motion made by Council member Morgan, seconded by Council member Floyd to amend the agenda to add:

AA1- Discussion of draft letter to be sent to the Georgia Department of Revenue and others regarding the call to commence renegotiations of the 2022 Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) in the event such call is not sent in a timely manner by Newton County.

Motion carried unanimously.

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4. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve a 5 year service agreement with AXON Enterprise for FLEET 3 in-car video solution, services, and training amounting to \$545,090.00.

Motion carried unanimously.

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5. Motion made by Council member Baggett, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve a 5 year service agreement with AXON Enterprise for body cameras amounting to \$374,328.00.

Motion carried unanimously.

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6. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Morgan to approve the MEAG 2021 Telecom Project Year-end Settlement Section B and applied as a one lump credit to the monthly power bill amounting to \$221.00.

Motion carried unanimously.

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7. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve an Estoppel Certificate special exemption 15 Declaration of Protective Covenants for Covington/Newton County Industrial Park to Trellis Loop Atlanta, LLC.

Motion carried unanimously.

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8. Motion made by Council member Floyd, seconded by Council member Davis to approve an Estoppel Certificate special exemption 18 Dedication of Railroad Right-of-Way and Agreements concerning Use and Maintenance by City of Covington, Georgia and Newton County, Georgia to Trellis Loop Atlanta, LLC.

Motion carried unanimously.

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Mayor Steve Horton announced to everyone Mr. William Smith's last day with the City of Covington is July 15, 2022, thanked him, and wished him well in his future endeavors.

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A discussion ensued regarding the Eastside Sanitary Sewer Basin Improvements project and an update by City Manager Tres Thomas stated the current sole bid amount of \$39,000,000.00, along with the approved materials amount of \$7,000,000.00, totals \$46,000,000.00 and is nearly three times more than the estimate from consultant. City Manager Tres Thomas stated he is in the process of rebidding project.

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10. Motion made by Council member Morgan seconded by Council member Henderson to approve of a draft letter to be sent to the Georgia Department of Revenue and others regarding the call to commence renegotiations of the 2022 Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) in the event such call is not sent in a timely manner by Newton County.

Motion carried unanimously.

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Ms. Thelma Nolley questioned why no one plays by the same rules in the City referring to racial prejudice in the promotion of City employees. Ms. Nolley stated white employees get more pay increase with promotions than black employees do. Ms. Nolley stated it seemed like the last two City Managers put so much more in place and built the Downtown area and that people are told things would be done or given but yet are lied to. Ms. Nolley stated that other employees are sitting in on interviews and deciding who gets promotions. Ms. Nolley pointed out there are "No Motor Vehicles" signs on the trail yet Police, City trucks, golf carts, and riding lawn mowers ride the trail and one side of the trail by West Street doesn't have sticks (metal post dividers) but the other side by Emory Street does and is not safe. Ms. Nolley stated the citizens on both sides of the trail pay taxes and should all be treated the same. Ms. Nolley stated individuals on boards need looking into as they conduct personal business from the board and that Code Enforcement should be addressing everyone, not just sending violation letters to black property owners. Ms. Nolley addressed a certain property that needed grass cutting. Ms. Nolley stated until things change in this City there will always be race problems and that five folks actually run the City, not the Council.

Chief Stacy Cotton stated it was at his request to have bollards (metal post dividers) on the trail removed in order for emergency vehicles to have accessibility and that there is plenty of room for passage. Chief Cotton stated for public safety concerns and maintenance needs, it is not a good idea to have the bollards up.

Mayor Steve Horton stated all bollards should either be up or down along the entire trail.

Comments from the City Manager:

- Site visit made along with Assistant Chief Bradford last week regarding Ms. Hawnethia Williams' concerns about unruly behavior in her neighborhood and placement of "No Parking" signs on both sides of Lee Street.
- Impact Fees Committee needed of at least five but less than eleven members and nominee submissions requested.

Council member Morgan thanked City Manager Tres Thomas for making a site visit to Ms. Williams' neighborhood and addressing concerns. Council member Morgan thinks there should be "No Parking" signs on one side of Lee Street and the elected body should take oversight on what is best for the community, not five or ten citizens. Council member Morgan stated safety should be number one issue and we do not have enough policies and procedures in place, referencing Interim City Manager governance. Council member Morgan stated conversation should continue regarding proposed Nelson Heights community precinct and asked everyone to pray for the victims of shootings in Akron, OH and Chicago, IL. Council member Morgan asked for City, Council, and Police Department to look at Citizens' Review Board to have things in place for when tragedy happens.

Council member Baggett stated the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks were spectacular and thanked the Street Department, Covington Police Department, and Newton County Sheriff's Office for their hard work before and after celebration. Council member Baggett stated she sent Ken Malcom a "thank you" text for the Community Development Department stepping in to make sure things ran smoothly. Council member Baggett stated she was glad everyone did a great job and worked well together. Council member Baggett addressed concerns Ms. Thelma Nolley had in regards to the trail stating she felt it necessary Police vehicles have access to ensure safety as well as City vehicles to take care of trash and debris on both east and west sides.

Council member Davis stated she received a correspondence asking if there was a City Staff Lead for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Council member Davis stated everyone needs someone to talk to and gage the temperature of City employees. Council member Davis asked for an update on charging station availability for electric vehicles besides the stations behind the Square.

Council member Floyd stated he is opposed to free electric vehicle charging stations and asked if there were local glass recycling collection points. Council member Floyd stated the fireworks display for July 4<sup>th</sup> and the work of the City Street Department were second to none.

City Manager Tres Thomas stated he will check with Joel Smith regarding electric vehicle charging stations and Kevin Walker with the Solid Waste Group has been taking glass to be recycled to a company in Atlanta. City Manager Tres Thomas stated the Sustainability group will follow-up on local glass recycling options.

Council member Henderson stated he wanted to thank everyone with the City that helped with the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration as well as other departments from other cities that helped. Council member Henderson stated people had reached out to him about salaries and salary studies may be a way to evaluate promotion fairness for City employees.

Mayor's comments:

- July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration was great, everyone did a great job, and he was moved by humanity.
- EMS meeting held at hospital and City staff will be getting with Council for update.
- June 27<sup>th</sup> SPLOST meeting held with Newton County regarding proposed negotiations and Intergovernmental Agreement needed by July 19, 2022. Another meeting with Newton County for further discussion hopefully will take place before next City Council meeting, as District 4 and District 5 make up most of the county and a request for a larger split is reasonable.

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Being no further business meeting adjourned at 8:02 PM.

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Steve Horton, Mayor

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Audra M. Gutierrez, City Clerk