

**REGULAR MEETING, MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF COVINGTON,
GEORGIA, COUNCIL ROOM, MARCH 18, 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.

1. Motion made by Council member Henderson, seconded by Council member Moore to approve the minutes from the Regular Council Meeting held on March 4, 2024.

Motion carried unanimously.

Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson gave a detailed staff report and recommendations regarding a text amendment to Section 16.12.190, Event Permits. The amendment includes further defining what a special event is, increasing the submission timeline to request an event permit, and amending the submission process for all special event permits within the city limits to go to the Community/Tourism and Downtown Development Department (excluding alcohol permits, which will remain in the Planning Department). A public hearing was held at 6:43 PM.

2. Motion made by Council member Rutberg, seconded by Council member Moore to approve the **first** 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 16TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2001, AS AMENDED BY
PREVIOUS AMENDMENTS, TO ALTER CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF
TITLE 16 OF THE SAID CODE OF ORDINANCES FOR THE PURPOSE
OF **AMENDING SECTION 16.12.190 (SPECIAL EVENT PERMITS)** OF
CHAPTER 16.12 (PROCEDURES); TO REPEAL CONFLICTING
ORDINANCES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.”

Motion carried unanimously.

Council member Rutberg left meeting at 6:44 PM, recusing himself from public hearing, discussion, and voting after disclosing he owns a tire repair business and a rental commercial property that could be impacted by the proposed changes regarding a text amendment to Section 16.08.010 Definitions, Section 16.16.020 Permitted Uses, and Chapter 16.20 Supplemental Use Provisions.

Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson gave a detailed report and recommendations from staff and Planning Commission regarding a text amendment to Section 16.08.010 Definitions, Section 16.16.020 Permitted Uses, and Chapter 16.20 Supplemental Use Provisions regarding land uses and outdated code. Council member Keck stated she would like to add vaping verbiage to “Tobacco Stores” definition in Section 16.08.010. Planning and Zoning Director Judy Johnson stated that the “fence or masonry wall” mentioned in Chapter 16.20 Supplemental Use Provision Section 17 part D. was requested by Planning Commission to be opaque. A public hearing was held at 6:59 PM. Dr. David Pellington of Life Dance Wellness Center at 7193 Industrial Blvd. was present to speak in favor, and passed out a handout to Mayor and Council.

3. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the **first** reading of an ordinance for the City of Covington, amended as follows:

- To Section 16.20.725-Supplemental Use Provision for Tire Store Retail:
 - B. If the use includes the removal or installation of tire(s), all activities shall be carried on *indoors. At the close of the business each day, all displays and equipment shall be stored within an enclosed building not visible from the roadway.*
- To Section 16.08.010 adding vaping verbiage to “Tobacco Stores” definition

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PREVIOUS AMENDMENTS, TO ALTER CERTAIN PROVISION OF
TITLE 16 OF THE SAID CODE OF ORDINANCES FOR THE PURPOSE
OF **AMENDING SECTION 16.08.010 (DEFINITIONS) OF CHAPTER
16.08 (INTERPETATIONS AND DEFINITIONS), AMENDING
SECTIONS 16.16.020 (PERMITTED USES) OF CHAPTER 16.16**

(STANDARD ZONING DISTRICTS), ADOPTING SECTION 16.20.125 (BANQUET HALL), SECTION 16.20.325 (FUNERAL HOMES), SECTION 16.20.430 (LANDSCAPING SERVICES), SECTION 16.20.455 (MASSAGE/WELLNESS SPAS/CENTER), SECTION 16.20.725 (TIRE STORE RETAIL) AND SECTION 16.20.735 (TRUCK TERMINAL/DISPATCH/PARKING) OF CHAPTER 16.20 (SUPPLEMENTAL USE PROVISIONS), TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.”

Motion carried unanimously.

Council member Rutberg returned to meeting at 7:11 PM.

4. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Johnson to approve updates to City Personnel Policies #305 Annual Leave, #801 Travel Expenses, and #805 Educational Assistance.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. Motion made by Council member Moore, seconded by Council member Johnson to approve the installation of temporary all-way stop at Washington and Brown Streets due to accidents caused by site distance issues.

Motion carried unanimously.

6. Motion made by Council member Keck, seconded by Council member Henderson to approve the **first** reading of an ordinance for the City of Covington:

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

Council member Henderson noted the current rules for the conduct of meetings state “Public Comments” have a five-minute time limit. Consensus of Council was to have “Public Comments” remain at a five-minute time limit.

Austin B. Smith, owner of Right Choice Motors at 2122 Pace Street, stated he would like to know if there is some language that could be added to Section 16.20.725-Supplemental Use Provision for Tire Store Retail in regards to being able to work on lifted trucks outside during the daytime. Mr. Smith stated the doors of his shop, as well as many other shops, to not go up high enough to work on lifted vehicles.

Comments from the City Manager:

- Great work from Gas Director Mike Jewell and his team, Gas Department had a comprehensive inspection which occurs every five years and had opportunity to sit in on review with the inspection team, all municipal gas systems of Georgia are required to maintain compliance with multiple state and federal regulations and maintain ten different compliance manuals as well as several records, Public Service Authority composed of four members found no compliance issues with the City of Covington Gas team

Council member Johnson stated she enjoyed the MEAG Lunch and Learn held at the Covington Municipal Airport earlier and learned a lot.

Council member Davis stated she wanted to give a shout out to City Manager Tres Thomas and Deputy City Manager John King for assisting with several complaints from last week. Council member Davis further stated recently her reliability, accountability, and work ethic came into question and she encouraged everyone to do an open records request to verify her or other Council members’ attendance. Council member Davis stated she is not earning a living or receiving benefits from the City of Covington, as she has a career outside of her Council position. Council member Davis stated the opportunity to serve the community she was born and raised is amazing and she enjoys all the communication received from citizens. Council member Davis stated she will continue to serve her community.

Council member Rutberg stated he also enjoyed the MEAG Lunch and Learn.

Council member Henderson questioned City Manager Tres Thomas on the status of the Nelson Heights/Puckett Street sidewalk project. Mr. Thomas asked Transportation Department Manager John Hendrix for an update. Mr. Hendrix

stated he is waiting on cost estimates from the contractor. Mr. Thomas stated there are several factors to take into consideration, but the project should be moving forward in the next couple of weeks.

Mayor Baggett stated she had the opportunity to travel with members of the Industrial Development Authority to the State Capital and spoke with several industries present as well as the Senator and Representatives from our area, who represent us well at the Dome. Mayor Baggett stated a work session is needed to discuss Board and Committee openings, and requested Council to consider individuals in their communities willing to serve. Mayor Baggett further stated Easter and Spring Break are approaching and to consider what is coming along with the holidays, especially safety.

7. Motion made by Council member Davis, seconded by Council member Henderson to enter into Executive Session at 7:45 PM for the purpose of discussing land.

Motion carried unanimously.

8. Motion made by Council member Rutberg, seconded by Council member Moore to enter into Regular Session at 8:33 PM.

Motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM.

Fleeta Baggett, Mayor

Audra M. Gutierrez, City Clerk