

Athens City Council
Committee Meeting
Thursday, December 7, 2017

Those in attendance were Mayor Bob Dowell, Clerk Cindy McFarland, and Aldermen: Chris Basso, Larry Buhr, Ron Canterbury, Tom Croft Sr., Tom Herman, and Harry Nichols. Persons in the audience included Linda Wasilewski, Treasurer Ryan Seifert, Kenneth Babcock, Jo Babcock, Judi Harlan, Jack Harlan, Gary Richardson, Rex Kieffer, Sharon Mester, Charles Mester, Chief Tim Becker, Ryne Crowe, Robert Bluett, Michael Lockwood, and Hayley Yoakum.

Mayor Dowell opened the meeting and Chief Tim Becker presented the Police Report. The Mayor said that he appreciates that the police have been responding to medical calls in the community. Treasurer Ryan Seifert presented the treasurer's report. The Mayor said that the Streets & Alleys Report would be presented Monday. Ryne Crowe presented the Water Report and Robbie Bluett presented the Sewer Report. Alderman Canterbury said that the Cemetery Board did not meet but they had received the letter from the forester about the tree removal.

Next, Zoning Administrator Judi Harlan presented information from the 12/04/17 Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting regarding the request made by Charles "Butch" Mester for a variance to the current zoning ordinance stating that an accessory building must be built on the lot with principal use. It is the hope of Mr. Mester that he is able to build the structure so that he can clean up some of his other buildings around town. He mailed out certified letters to residents within 150 feet of this property and some were in attendance with concerns. One resident is concerned that the way the building is accessed may damage the berm that the city had recently constructed to stop water from flooding his property. Another citizen stated that he had no issues with the building as long as Mr. Mester keeps it cleaned up and that the storage building right behind his property is cleaned up. There was lengthy discussion about Mr. Mester's problem properties, time frame of property clean-up, and time frame to construct the new building. Judi said that all members of the Zoning Board of Appeals voted yes to recommend to the City Council to approve Mr. Mester the variance. Alderman Nichols said that this would be voted on Monday night. Judi also said that new Zoning Board member Karen Stott would be submitting her resignation due to a possible conflict. Judi would like a vote on the agenda for Monday night for the council to accept her resignation and a vote to appoint Jeff Stott to fill the vacant seat and assume her term.

Next on the agenda was the 2018 Tax Levy of the city of Athens and Road District No. 13 for the corporate year beginning May 1, 2017 and ending the 30th of April, 2018. The Mayor asked if there were any questions and there were none. Discussion about the trash contract renewal for sewer plant and the sewer plant lagoon wall was next.

Mayor Dowell went on to say that the bar owners in town are asking to stay open later on New Year's Eve since it falls on a Sunday this year. This will be on the agenda for vote on Monday.

Employee uniforms were next on the agenda. Mayor Dowell explained that the employees currently receive a clothing allowance. However uniforms would be safer and more professional. The Mayor provided some pricing and uniform examples. There was discussion about pricing, safety requirements for clothing, types of boots and the frequency of replacement, policies regarding uniform loss and damage, and badges for city employees.

The Illinois Bicentennial Proclamation was next on the agenda. The Mayor said that Governor Rauner had sent a special flag for the bicentennial which we are currently flying. The

proclamation encourages citizens to participate in the bicentennial events and projects which can be found on the Participate page at Illinois200.com. The vote to adopt the proclamation will be on the agenda for Monday.

Under Old Business, the Mayor gave an update on the street light repairs. Some have been fixed; 9 more have been documented to be fixed. Also, there was a short update on problem properties.

Under New Business, Alderman Basso said that he would like the council to take a look at some example forms he had brought in which would require citizens to complete a form, possibly on-line, to file a formal complaint about problem properties. He said this would be fairer and we would have a record that a complaint had been filed. This process would also provide a timeline. All agreed that this would be a good idea.

Alderman Basso said that he also has another idea. He would like city employees to have a city email address, possibly something like Microsoft office. This would be more professional and confidential. He said there are different packages which provide different options like file storage and sharing. Possibly the office manager, Karissa, could look into this further.

Alderman Buhr said that the Food Pantry is getting ready to move into their new building. He would like the council to approve donating \$400 to be paid from the gaming fund to feed the kids who will be volunteering to assist with the move. Mayor Dowell said this would be on the agenda for Monday.

The Mayor asked if there were any public comments. There were none. Motion made by Alderman Buhr, seconded by Alderman Herman, to adjourn and enter into executive session at 8:12pm.

Council returned to the meeting room at 8:32pm to review bills.