Athens City Council
Committee Meeting
October 8, 2015

Those in attendance were Mayor Donald Neisler, Clerk Debra Richardson, Treasurer Darin Bowman and Aldermen: Anita Bednarko, Larry Buhr, Ron Canterbury, Tom Croft Sr., Bobbie Dowell and Harry Nichols. Persons in the audience included Darin and Theresa Stewart, Gary Richardson, Rex Kieffer, Merle Messersmith, Linda Wasilewski, Chris and Rachel Thoele, Rick Doggett, Glen Maxwell, Scott Wade of AYSA, Zoning Administrator Judi Harlan and Police Chief Tim Becker.

Mayor Neisler welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Judi Harlan addressed the council regarding a decision on the exchange of ground between the City and Darin Fritz. Alderman Buhr asked if Harlan had a cost estimate on this issue. Harlan reported that there would be no cost to the City for the process. Harlan stated that Fritz has been maintaining the entrance and absorbing the costs of doing so. Alderman Buhr asked if the north entrance would be able to handle all the traffic. Harlan stated yes, that it would. She has spoken with Jason LeMar, and he stated that there would need to be an amendment to the plat. Harlan reported that IDOT would like to see the City except the entrance as a City street. Alderman Bednarko stated that she is under the understanding that this project could cost Fritz upwards of $20,000.00. Harlan indicated that the cost would be minimal for Fritz. She stated that Route 29 Fitness would be moving dirt soon for that project. Harlan advised that if the City does not agree to except the entrance as a street, Fritz might be required to vacate the entrance. She would like the County engineer to check out the road.

Treasurer Darin Bowman addressed the council. Bowman reported that the City is still not receiving video gaming revenue. He stated that the City had received their second property tax payment from the County in the amount of $125,000.00. Bowman indicated that there was a DCEO payment made and the City rolled the lime silo loan into an interdepartmental loan.

Chief Becker reported that street employees have been working on Fall Festival setup and patching of potholes. Mayor Neisler indicated that they have been helping Robin Cawley with water and wastewater issues.

Mayor Neisler informed the council that the City has received a water violation concerning not getting the August water samples in on time. He stated that this violation will appear on the annual CCR report and is a level 3 violation. Mayor Neisler noted that a SBR valve has had to be pulled and operator Steven Sanderfield is aware of this. Neisler noted that Sanderfield has been unable to find complete records for the wastewater plant, but is working on a new record system. Sanderfield is working with Cawley on the testing at the plant. Mayor Neisler stated that Sanderfield has requested that the City purchase a composite sampler. Mayor Neisler indicated that the City's contract with water operator Mike McCarthy has been rejected by IEPA. Alderman Dowell indicated that he and Chief Becker had been at a residence on Jackson Street to check on a complaint about the water being saturated with lime. Mayor Neisler reported that there was an issue with the polymer feeder at the water plant and when the polymer feeder is not working the lime feeder should be shut down. Mayor Neisler stated that the clear cone had to be drained and flushed. Rex Kieffer asked about the red flagging of meters that may have leaks. Mayor Neisler stated that the City is planning to start checking for leaks.

Police Chief Tim Becker addressed the council. Becker reported that all vehicle maintenance is up to date and the police truck is in need of new tires. The estimate from Bert's Service is $700.00. Chief Becker indicated that he is sending Officer Ben Hollis to cell phone investigation training in Springfield. This training will aid in using a persons cell phone to retrieve information in a case. There was an ordinance violation for a dog running loose on Redwood and a warning issued for an abandoned vehicle on Monroe Street.

Chief Becker stated that he has written an ordinance on replacing yield signs with stop signs on Lincoln and Jackson Streets. He indicated that there have been several accidents in this area. There was discussion about speeding throughout the City. Several persons questioned whether the traffic could be slowed down on Washington and Jackson Streets. Chief Becker stated that he has run radar on Washington Street. Alderman Croft stated that he would like the speed limit to be reduced to 25 mph on Washington Street. Chief Becker indicated that maybe the council should consider making the speed limit 25 mph throughout the City. There was a request that a radar indicator sign be placed on Washington Street.

Mayor Neisler thanked everyone who worked on the Fall Festival. He commended Alderman Dowell for his time and effort in the planning and Judi Harlan for organizing the parade. Alderman Dowell expressed his appreciation for Karissa Carls, Don Squires, Ryne Crowe, Robbie Bluett and Chief Becker. He stated that the weather was not great, but hopes for better next year. The dates for next year's festival will be September 29,30 and 31.

Mayor Neisler informed the council that a snowplow and salt spreader would need to be ordered for the new truck, which is ready to be picked up tomorrow. Chief Becker stated that City employees would be able to install the equipment. Chief Becker indicated that the cost for both would be $9,736.31. Gary Richardson asked if the City would be taking care of the maintenance on the new truck. Chief Becker stated that they would and there are plans to add an hour meter on the vehicle.

Mayor Neisler stated that the wastewater operator has requested that the City purchase a composite sampler to be used for testing purposes. He asked that the council give him the authority to choose the unit, which may cost as much as $6,000.00. Alderman Nichols stated that he is concerned that this piece of equipment was not purchased beforehand, since it is necessary. Mayor Neisler indicated that the sampler is needed. Alderman Dowell asked if the City's engineers would be coming to any meetings in the near future. Mayor Neisler stated that they could be asked to come if the council would request them to attend, but he does not have them at meetings because of the cost.

Mayor Neisler indicated that he would like for Robin Cawley to attend microbiology training in Edwardsville. The cost is $360.00 for the conference. Alderman Bednarko asked if the City covers the costs of travel, meals and lodging. Mayor Neisler stated that the City would cover all costs for Cawley. Mayor Neisler stated that he would like to send employees to a class on fire hydrants. Gary Richardson asked if the City has a certified water operator. Mayor Neisler stated that the City has an operator on contract to sign off on the water operations. He indicated that Cawley has the education, but not the required experience working at a plant. She could take the necessary tests and pass them, but she will need hands on experience to fully operate a plant.

Mayor Neisler reported that the City would like to sell the piece of property the City has acquired and cleaned up on Mill Street. Chief Becker stated that the County had given the property to the City, but he has information that there is still $9,000.00 in tax liens on the property. Becker stated that the City spent about $4,900.00 on the clean up. Alderman Nichols stated that the City should at least recoup the money that was spent on the cleanup. It was advised that all municipal property must be sold by bid.

Judi Harlan informed the council that there is a zoning meeting on October 12, 2015 to vote on the change of property from agriculture to residential. The property is located to the south of the Joel Hall Cemetery. Harlan stated that Darin Fritz has informed her that he will not be ready for a decision on the acceptance of the entrance at the Boar's Nest.

Scott Wade of AYSA stated that soccer would be ending at the end of October and they will be doing a cleanup.

Linda Wasilewski reported that two benches in the West Cemetery had been damaged. She stated that the cemetery board would like to repair the benches.

Alderman Buhr thanked Alderman Dowell and Fire Chief Joe Crowe for their work in getting the fire hydrants flushed. Mayor Neisler stated that he was given a list of four hydrants that are not operable.

Linda Wasilewski stated that she has a concern about persons walking their dogs and not cleaning up after them. It was stated that City ordinances do not address the issue of cleaning up after dogs or other pets.

Judi Harlan stated that Michael Meyers building permit had expired and he has been told that he must place guttering on the north side of the garage. She reported that the water runoff is changing the natural waterway. Harlan indicated that Meyers has the guttering and is waiting for help to install it and there still is garbage throughout the property. Chief Becker stated that Meyers did get a dumpster, but it was not there long. Harlan noted that Meyers has gotten a permit for the porch.

Council left for executive session for personnel matters at 8:00 PM.

Council returned to meeting room to review bills at 8: 23 PM.