

Athens City Council  
Committee Meeting  
Thursday, May 10, 2018

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 "Butch" Nichols. Persons in the audience included Linda Wasilewski, Treasurer Ryan Seifert, Gary Richardson, Todd Lawson, Norm Flowers, Matt Schoenhard, Derrick Fritz, Robert Bluett, Ryne Crowe, Ellie Stuhmer, Karissa Carls, Nicole McCormick, and Tricia Laager.

Mayor Dowell opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Sergeant Derrick Fritz presented the Police Report and Treasurer Ryan Seifert presented the treasurer's report. Mayor Dowell said that the Street & Alleys report would be presented Monday. Ryne Crowe stepped forward to present the Water report. Ryne said that he had received the quote for the lime motor from the manufacturer and had been unable to locate the needed parts elsewhere. Robbie Bluett presented the Wastewater report and requested replacement of the current DO probes which are outdated and not working properly. Also, the manhole lids arrived, and replacement is under way. Alderman Canterbury stated that there had been no Cemetery meeting, but he did share that the forester will be looking at some of the trees after crops are out and that Minors will take care of some of the trees with lower hanging limbs to allow for mowing. Karissa Carls presented the Office Manager report and said that water e-billing has really taken off. The number of customers enrolled since last month has doubled and some people are even taking advantage of the recurring payment option when they call to enroll in e-billing.

First on the agenda was the American Legion's request for a liquor license, and partnership with the city for this year's Salute to America celebration. Norm Flowers stepped forward and gave a little history of the American Legion in Athens and Salzenstein Park. He said that the Legion has cared for and maintained the park throughout the years. In the recent past, removal of some of the trees has been necessary due to ash bore infestation. The Legion then added new bushes and trees. The Legion is requesting a liquor license because it is required by law for the Legion to have gaming machines. Funds raised by the gaming machines would be used to pay for kids in our community who want to go to Boys State, Girls State, & Police Academy, as well as to further help the community. Norm provided a letter from the Menard County American Legion Post 129 for the council explaining their intent and stating that the Legion members believe that Charles Salzenstein would be proud of the Legion for helping Veterans, community, and youth. Alderman Buhr asked how much it would cost to sponsor the kids for camp. The total was approximately \$1700. Alderman Nichols said that he would like to hear from the Salzenstein family. Norm said that letters had been sent to the family but that there had been no response. He ended by summarizing that the Legion wants to be a bigger part of the community, take care of itself without asking for assistance from the city, and support the community. Mayor Dowell said that first the council would need to vote to open another liquor license, and then vote to approve the Legion's application. Alderman Basso asked if the Legion would be required to buy their alcohol from a distributor and Norm confirmed that they would. It was decided that both votes would be on the agenda for Monday.

Next on the agenda was Central States Fireworks contract for the June 30<sup>th</sup> Salute to America. The total cost for the fireworks, crew, set-up, clean-up, and liability insurance would be \$6000. Alderman Nichols said that he thought the council had talked about increasing the amount spent on the fireworks display. Aldermen Buhr and Herman suggested increasing the spend to \$10,000 with the additional cost to be paid from the gaming fund. The council agreed this would be on Monday's voting agenda.

The new Athens Youth Council was next on the agenda. Mayor Dowell said that he had set in on one of their meetings and then introduced Matthew Schoenhard to speak on AYC behalf. AYC is requesting a \$1200 donation from the city for start-up and operating expenses. Mr. Schoenhard said that the first Youth Council event would be held on June 9<sup>th</sup>. There will be boxing, yoga, and self-defense. There has been lots of interest from the community and on social media. This will be a positive environment for kids in 6<sup>th</sup>—12<sup>th</sup> grade, targeting those that may be less fortunate. The hope is that this will gain momentum and there will be activities 2-3 times per month. The council agreed that this is a good idea and thanked Mr. Schoenhard for his service.

Next, the Mayor went on to the topic of the Boars Nest entrance. He shared letters from IDOT with the council concerning the retention ponds which are not the responsibility of the city but are the responsibility of the developer. The Mayor said that he just wanted to give everyone an update. The situation is very frustrating as the city would just like to complete the entrance.

Next on the agenda was the letter from the EPA concerning the 2013 IEPA loan closure and refund. The Mayor had been called and told that the loan had not been closed. The Mayor and Karissa located the paperwork and resubmitted to the EPA. The EPA responded that all conditions of the loan had been met and that the loan amount had been reduced by \$241,304.28.

Next, the Mayor said that the council has been provided a copy of the Library's budget. It is similar to last year. Mayor Dowell spoke to the city attorney and the paperwork for the appropriation should be ready for June's meeting.

Next was the topic of security cameras at the Library and City Hall. The city is working with Crime Stoppers to get cameras put up at the Library for an internet property exchange. Quotes are being gathered for cameras to be put up at the library and City Hall.

The Mayor went on to the Library summer reading program donation. The Library had asked if the city would be interested in donating again this year. Last year we donated \$250. The Mayor said that the council could vote on this Monday.

Mayor Dowell said that he received a card from Trish Laager and the Leo Club thanking the city for the donation to the Easter Egg hunt. He passed the letter around to the council.

Under Old Business, the Mayor gave an update on problem properties. First was the house fire property on Adams. The Mayor said that he and Chief Becker have sent letters and made numerous phone calls with no response. The Mayor spoke to the city attorney and was told to fine and post on the property and publish in the paper. If there is no response, the city can tear down the property and make the area safe for the community at the owner's expense. Linda Wasilewski said that the pool in the back yard is full of black water. Mayor Dowell said that he would contact the health department tomorrow. The Mayor said that several other vacant properties around town are set to be torn down next week.

Also under old business was the city-wide clean-up scheduled for May 21-22. The Mayor said that we have passed out fliers, published in the paper, posted over social media, and posted on the city website so hopefully we will have good participation. Alderman Herman asked what the city will do to people who still choose to not get rid of their junk. The Mayor said that he has already spoken to the police and those problem properties will be fined.

Under New Business was the empty lot at 412 S. Mill Street which had been deeded over to the city in lieu of fines and clean-up. The city has \$4,200 invested in the property. The Mayor asked the council if they are interested in listing this property as surplus property at the next meeting and placing it out for bids. There has been some interest in the property. Alderman Basso asked if this is a flood zone. Mayor Dowell said there is a creek there and this would need to be disclosed on the contract. Alderman Herman asked if there would be a minimum bid. The Mayor said that the law said that it must be 85% of the appraised value, we have \$4,200 is what we have in it, and we will make sure to follow the law. Aldermen Basso and Buhr agreed that \$4,200 would be fine since the city is paying currently for upkeep on the property.

Next the Mayor asked the council and attendees if there were any items for discussion and Alderman Canterbury said that he had a couple things. First, when we have the clean-up day, will Ley Metals have a metal dumpster here and would the city receive the funds from that metal? The Mayor answered affirmatively. Alderman Canterbury asked if the city could donate those proceeds to the Wiker Dog Walk. The Mayor said that the council can decide what to do with these funds. Alderman Basso said that he has received complaints about Mr. Ley's property. Mayor Dowell said that Mr. Ley has been working this week to clean up the property and the city will continue to work with him to make sure the property is cleaned up. Alderman Canterbury went on to his second issue. Mr. John Eden was the owner of the Long Nine, a house on Main Street, and a property on Washington Street. He passed away recently, and those properties are of historical value to our city. Alderman Canterbury wondered if there is any way the city could get a grant or anything to acquire those properties. The Mayor has spoken to the family and they are not sure what they are going to do. They may have a buyer for the Long Nine. Mayor Dowell said that he is going to speak to our congressmen Bill Brady and Tim Butler, the tourism bureau and the historic society to see if there is anything they can do to assist the city. Also, our grant writer comes on board June 1<sup>st</sup> and we can see if she can assist with a grant. Mayor Dowell also said that he would like to see the city do something in John Eden's honor for all he did to try to bring tourism to our town.

This ended the agenda for the evening. The Mayor thanked everyone and asked for a motion to enter into a short executive session. Motion made by Alderman Buhr, seconded by Alderman Herman, to enter into executive session at 8:02pm.

The council returned from executive session at 8:04pm. Linda Wasilewski asked if there is any way we could get some new playground equipment at the park. The Mayor said that he will get some brochures and put in an application for the Stahl Foundation. The council reviewed the bills and adjourned at 8:07pm.