

Athens City Council  
Committee Meeting  
August 4, 2016

Those in attendance were Mayor Donald Neisler, Clerk Debra Richardson and Aldermen: Anita Bednarko, Larry Buhr, Ron Canterbury, Tom Croft Sr., Bobbie Dowell and Harry Nichols. Persons in the audience included Zoning Administrator Judi Harlan, Water operator Robin Cawley, Officer Derrick Fritz, Rex Kieffer, Keyen Kieffer, Merle Messersmith, Gary Richardson, Linda Wasilewski and Don Squires.

Mayor Neisler reported that the streets and alleys report would be ready for the Monday night meeting. Alderman Nichols indicated that there was a pothole on Washington Street that needed to be filled.

Robin Cawley presented the water and wastewater reports. Cawley reported that they have been doing tree trimming at the water plant, which would take more than a month. Cawley stated that Brotcke Well & Pump had repaired the leak on Well #5 and Well #6 was cleaned. She indicated that Well #6 went from 170 GPM to 450 GPM. She stated that there had been a tree growing out of the aerator, and it has been removed. The polymer pump was changed from an 11 gallon per hour to a 50 gallon per hour pump and it is working great. Cawley indicated that Klingner and Associates would be coming to do humidity testing at the water plant to determine what kind of dehumidifiers are needed to help with the rust problems. Cawley reported she had contacted Oros and Bush about having a lagoon cleaned out. She stated that there were problems with the UV transformers at the wastewater plant. The vegetation has been cleaned from the sludge lagoon, but she is still having a problem with dumping and she seen something come into the plant that resembled white paint. Cawley indicated that she is working on finding out where this is coming from. Cawley stated that she had ordered the material from IMCO for the Johnson Road water main extension. She reported that City employees had installed a culvert on Harris Road that allows them access to the raw water mains that come into the plant. Alderman Nichols stated that he had a call from a lady who was concerned about someone dumping into the creek. Cawley indicated that the water has been tested and there seems to be no concern. Cawley stated that it looks like pond scum.

Officer Derrick Fritz presented the police report. Officer Fritz reported that all vehicles are up to date on maintenance and the new police utility squad has not been built yet, but would be delivered soon. Officer Fritz indicated that officers have requested that the new vehicle be equipped with a half cage, which holds a single prisoner and allows half of the back seat to be used by the vehicle operator. Officer Fritz stated that the City would like to purchase a 2012 Bobcat S770 skidsteer, which would include a planer at a cost of \$36,000.00. Officer Fritz reported that there were nine ordinance violation warnings during the month of July. Officer Fritz stated that the City has contacted attorney Bill Siders about the Monroe properties that have not been mowed. He indicated that Monroe was not aware that he was responsible for the properties since someone else has paid the taxes. Alderman Croft asked about the tall weeds on property on Monroe Street. Officer Fritz questioned the council about requiring property owners to trim grass and weeds on their properties. Mayor Neisler stated that maybe the ordinances needed to be amended. Alderman Dowell questioned the swimming pool violations. Officer Fritz stated that those violations were for stagnating water in pools. Alderman Nichols asked about the pools without fencing. Officer Fritz indicated that pools over 24 inches in height must be fenced.

Officer Fritz informed the council that the State of Illinois had passed a law that makes anything under 10 grams of cannabis a civil offense punishable by a fine of \$200.00. Officer Fritz stated that Chief Becker is recommending the council pass an ordinance making possession of cannabis of less than 10 grams and cannabis paraphernalia an ordinance violation punishable by a fine of \$300.00. Officer Fritz noted that the council could add a provision for possession of tobacco by a minor.

Officer Fritz reported that several council members have looked at the property at 500 N. Main Street. It was agreed that the house is in great disrepair. There were 123 calls for service, 78 traffic stops, 24 citations and 54 verbal warnings.

There was discussion on the items mentioned earlier in the meeting regarding the purchase of a single prisoner cage, Bobcat skidsteer and whether the City should consider passing ordinances on alcohol and tobacco products. Mayor Neisler recommended that the council agree to a contract with Huber Technology for maintenance of the machinery for the solids at the wastewater plant for three years at a cost of \$2,330.00 per year. Cawley indicated she was told that years ago the wastewater plant was flooded and the mechanical parts were under water at that time. Mayor Neisler stated that the council had been given a water receivable write off list in which the names are underlined. Alderman Nichols asked if everyone on the list past due over 120 days had been shut off? Mayor Neisler stated that he is not sure if they are, but he does not know. Alderman Dowell

stated that he does not agree with writing off a \$4,600.00 bill. Mayor Neisler explained that those bills have had penalties added monthly.

Mayor Neisler indicated that the City had been given an award certificate from the Athens Library for being a sponsor of the Summer Reading Program.

Alderman Buhr reported that each year the Menard County Health Department does fundraising to purchase much needed backpacks and school supplies for children in need. He indicated that the Athens Lions Club helped put together those items for 77 families. The children get to pick out a backpack and then are provided with school supplies. Buhr stated that Anne Smith is the lead person that organizes these efforts. He noted that the Lions gave a \$300.00 donation this year. Buhr asked that the council consider making a donation from the video gaming fund for next year. The cost of this project is around \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00. Alderman Canterbury suggested that the City donate \$1,000.00 towards the cause. Buhr reported that all supplies are purchased at local businesses. Buhr reported that it is overwhelming to watch the children pick out their backpacks and supplies and see the delight on their faces.

Alderman Buhr asked what the City could do about the properties that are not being mowed. Officer Fritz stated that the police have spoken with Harold Monroe about his properties and Monroe was under the impression that they had been sold for taxes and he no longer owned them. Officer Fritz indicated that Monroe has been told that he needs to have the properties mowed. Alderman Dowell asked if Michael Meyers has been paying on his fines. Mayor Neisler stated that he did not know. Officer Fritz stated that the City would need a court order to remove property. Linda Wasilewski stated that she would like the police to patrol more at the West Cemetery since there have been tombstones damaged. Rex Kieffer questioned the council about a barking dog on Washington Street.

Council left for conference room for executive session at 7:57 PM.

Council returned to meeting room to review the bills at 8:35 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.