Athens City Council  
Committee Meeting  
November 9, 2016

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 Police Chief Tim Becker, Zoning Administrator Judi Harlan, Operator Robin Cawley, Ashton Hedley, Shawn Lash, Rex Kieffer, Merle Messersmith, Gary Richardson, Chad Gaub, Linda Wasilewski and Jeff Stott.

Robin Cawley presented the water and wastewater reports. Cawley indicated that the south lime sludge lagoon at the water plant has been cleaned and she is in the process of completing the NPDES permit. Cawley stated that she plans to work on the bathroom repairs and replace the lime standpipe. She reported that the boiler at the wastewater plant had been serviced and they pulled the UV system. Cawley stated that the City has received the land application permit and the phosphorus testing equipment prices have been revised due to finding lower prices. Cawley reported that they are still waiting for the permit for the Johnson Road project. Buhr asked how long it should take for the project. Cawley indicated that it should take about one week.

Police Chief Tim Becker addressed the council regarding the police. Chief Becker indicated that the new Ford Explorer is at Armitage Collision having the police decals installed. He indicated that he is requesting to purchase a 10-8 video system for the vehicle pending a test period. The cost would be $2,004.95. Chief Becker stated that the drug task force officer has accepted a position with Menard County. He would like approval to continue the current agreement and hire a replacement. Chief Becker noted that there were three ordinance violation warnings and one citation during the month of October. There were 99 calls for service, 77 traffic stops, 21 citations, 56 verbal warnings and two crashes.

Treasurer Darin Bowman presented the financial report. Bowman asked about a military equipment sale. Chief Becker indicated that there was a sale of a Caterpillar for $48,500.00. Chief Becker stated that they are not as free with that equipment as they have been in the past. Bowman stated that there were no DCEO loan payments received in October. He indicated that he printed a bill for Bryant which includes three month of interest. The video gaming revenue for October was $2,488.00.

Mayor Neisler stated that the hiring of Breezi Davis for office water clerk did not work out. He indicated that Davis did not even start. Mayor Neisler stated that he is now recommending the hiring of Justina Gudgel for that position.

Mayor Neisler reported that the agreement for the "Stahl Athens Community Park Charitable Foundation" is ready for the council’s approval. Mayor Neisler stated that City attorney Denise Barr has reviewed the agreement.

Mayor Neisler reported that he had some corrections for the Menard Rural Water contract that he would have for the Monday night meeting.

Mayor Neisler asked the council for their opinions on the presentation for the replacement of the water meters for Athens. Nichols stated that he had concerns about the figures for the savings over a long period of time. Chief Becker indicated that they have another company that would like to present the council with information. Nichols indicated that he is worried about the hidden costs. He stated that he would like to see all the council members attend the same meeting.

Dowell stated that he is researching the making of a Welcome Veterans sign from Ace Sign Company. He indicated that he is waiting on the artwork for the sign.
Mayor Neisler informed the council that he has not posted an advertisement for a wastewater operator because he does not have a compensation package that he can present.

Mayor Neisler reported that he has received a letter from DCEO regarding the closing of that account. He indicated that the City could use the monies in any manner deemed appropriate by the community. Treasurer Bowman indicated that the balance of the account in around $21,000.00.

Mayor Neisler stated that he had asked Zoning Administrator Judi Harlan to report on the attendance of the Zoning Board members. Harlan has questioned whether the Zoning Board could be dissolved due to poor participation for the meetings. Harlan stated that she can usually only get four persons to attend regularly. Harlan indicated that she has asked Mayor Neisler to contact the City attorney for her advice. Mayor Neisler indicated that the attorney has stated that if there were a zoning ordinance, there would need to be a zoning board. Nichols stated that there needed to be checks and balances. Dowell stated that he would like for the Zoning Board to have more authority. Harlan stated that she does almost all of the work and then presents her findings to the Zoning Board.

Mayor Neisler stated that he was contacted about someone wanting to open a hardware store in Athens. He stated that the person would like to know what the City would be willing to do to attract a business. The property is located on the west side of Route 29. Dowell stated that he would like to meet with the individual.

Mayor Neisler indicated that an Athens police officer came and asked him about civil complaints. He stated that there are telephone complaints about a yard needing mowed and he gives those to the chief or an officer. Mayor Neisler stated that some of the complaints are for repeat offenders. Mayor Neisler stated that he feels that there should need to be a signed complaint by the neighbor, and the City would have a reason to go out. Chief Becker stated that he has had numerous complaints about tents on properties and he can not do anything about that. Chief Becker indicated that there have been complaints about numerous toys in a yard, and he cannot do anything about that. Croft stated that with the police force driving around that people should not have to complain about violations, because the police should handle those things without a complaint. He noted that there are many vehicles that are sitting around and have been for years. Chief Becker indicated that the council removed from the ordinance the item of having to move vehicles every seven days. Buhr asked why Sangamon Health Department would not do anything about the mess on Redwood Avenue.

Mayor Neisler stated that the City has been doing a review of water accounts and they have become aware that the Athens Library does not pay a water bill. He asked if the council was aware of that situation. Jeff Stott stated that when the library moved to their new location, that there was an agreement that the library would not be billed for water and sewer usage, since they are apart of the City.

Mayor Neisler stated that the Stone River Group regarding the municipal electrical aggregation for electric rates in the City has contacted him.

Alderman Nichols stated that he would like for the agenda to provide for items of new business and old business. Nichols asked what was the latest on the entrance at the Boar's Nest. Chief Becker indicated that IDOT had been contacted and they told him that there would need to be an engineering study, but not a traffic study. Chief Becker indicated that there was a traffic study done by IDOT with a clock being installed and then removed. Chief Becker stated that the City is waiting to hear back from them. He reported that IDOT would like to see the drainage done properly. Harlan stated that Route 29 Fitness would like this issue resolved. Nichols stated that he would like to see this issue move forward.

Alderman Dowell stated that he as spoken with the property owners by the Hargrave Street railroad, and they are not sure who owns the hedgerow. He indicated that the school and fire
department would be writing letters stating how dangerous the crossing is. Dowell stated that concerning the scholarships, he is waiting for other organizations to update their applications. Dowell reported that he attended a Menard County Task Force meeting, and he would like to recommend that anyone that might have a chance to attend, to do so. Dowell indicated that a woman contacted him about having a Telepharmacy business in Athens. He stated that there is good chance that this may become a reality in the future. Dowell indicated that Julianne Manuel would be at the Monday meeting to present her plans to the council. He stated that he has contacted HSHS medical group about providing some type of clinic in Athens. Harlan stated that a pharmacy would need to be added to the zoning ordinance.

Council left for conference room for executive session for personnel matters at 8:19 PM.

Council returned to meeting room at 8:43 PM to review bills.

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 PM.