

Athens City Council  
Committee Meeting  
Thursday, December 10, 2020  
Zoom Meeting ID: 825-300-3670 / Password: Apr9Athens

Mayor Bob Dowell opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Clerk Cindy McFarland called roll. Those in attendance were Mayor Bob Dowell, and Aldermen: Larry Buhr, Amy Chernowsky, Rachel Lantz, Butch Nichols, Chris Reichert, and Angella Thompson. Persons in the audience included Ginger Newingham, Tim Becker, and Nicole McCormick.

Chief Becker presented the Police Report and asked if the council had any questions. Alderman Thompson had a clarifying question about overtime. Mayor Dowell presented the Treasurer's Report. He explained that the \$25,000 that had been moved from the Gaming fund for the new well had been put back in the Gaming fund because we did not receive the grant for the well. Our engineers are working on the resubmission for the grant. Mayor Dowell presented the Streets and Alleys Report, the Water Report, and the Sewer Report. Nicole McCormick and Mayor Dowell presented the Office Manager's Report. They explained that we will be working with people through the new year to collect past due funds and reduce the number of water shut offs. Employee health insurance costs have increased quite a bit. After discussing all options with city employees, they decided they would like to stay with the plan they have. The vote on insurance renewal will be on the agenda for Monday. There will be no Cemetery meeting until March. The Vehicle Maintenance/Fleet report will be available Monday.

First on the discussion agenda was an update on Covid-19. Mayor Dowell said that public health officials will be conducting free drive-up Covid-19 testing at Athens City Hall from 8am-4:30pm this Saturday, 12/12/2020. Also, we have received some of our equipment purchased with the Covid-19 CARES Act funds. We have been using the equipment to disinfect city vehicles and office areas.

Next the Mayor said he was checking on changing our subdivision ordinances to allow oil and chip roads and not require sidewalks and curbs. According to our engineers, a lot of contractors and engineers will research and find out what each city's requirements are and then not choose to build in cities that have more expensive requirements. The Mayor asked the council if they would be interested in this type of change so that we could possibly attract more subdivision construction and more residents. The council agreed that we could look at this.

The Mayor said that we have the tax levy deadlines coming up. The council members had received a copy of the ordinances in their packets. He asked if there were any questions. Alderman Thompson had a question about the dates on the ordinances which the Mayor clarified. The vote on these tax levies will be on the agenda for Monday.

The Stahl Foundation funding award was next on the agenda. Mayor Dowell said that there were two ideas submitted to the foundation. One was for \$10,677 for additional security cameras at the park. The second was for \$60,000 for a concession stand with ADA compliant restrooms. The full amount was awarded for the cameras and \$40,000 was awarded for the concession stand with ADA compliant restrooms. The Mayor said we can resubmit for more funds later. Also, the council had discussed putting together a committee to gather ideas for further improving our parks. Mayor Dowell expressed thanks and appreciation for the Stahl Foundation and their support for our community.

Last on the agenda was a request from the library which was presented by Ginger Newingham, the Athens Librarian. There was a technical issue which caused a delay with this presentation. Meanwhile, Alderman Thompson asked about funds left in the Covid-19 relief account for small businesses. She said that some businesses are still struggling and maybe we should revisit this issue.

Alderman Reichert confirmed that there is \$2500 left in this account. Two of the businesses that took advantage of this relief in the first round, then closed their business in Athens and moved to another location. Alderman Thompson suggested that, as other Covid-19 relief programs do, we could require that each business specify what they will use the funds for and provide documentation. Also, if the business leaves Athens within a set time period, they would be required to repay the money. It was decided that Alderman Reichert and Alderman Thompson will work together on wording for the next relief round. The technical issue was resolved and Mayor Dowell introduced Ginger Newingham. The Mayor and Ms. Newingham are working together to improve communications between the city and the library. Ms. Newingham explained that the library has been very busy with a Christmas Tree event, the new 6<sup>th</sup> grade book club, hosting an Angel tree, Story Hour, and the Friends of the Library has been busy recruiting. Also, the police department has been working more closely with the library to address some behavior issues occurring there. The request from the library is that the city assist shoveling the walks at the library in the winter. Alderman Reichert said that he has no problem with this if time allows. Chief Becker said that the city could assist in heavier snowfalls but not just for a dusting. Main city sidewalks would take precedent. Ms. Newingham said that she would shovel the lighter snow. Mayor Dowell said that the city does not mind helping out. Alderman Thompson pointed out that the library opens later so it would not need to be cleared first thing in the morning.

Under old business was an update on problem properties. Mayor Dowell said that summons have been served on the Jefferson Street property.

The Mayor asked if there was anything else. Alderman Buhr asked that the council donate \$500 each to the Athens Food Pantry and to the Lions Club for the Toys for Angels program. Donations are down and the need this year is greater due to Covid-19. The council asked for clarification as to how that Toys for Angels program worked. Alderman Buhr provided details. The council also discussed the possibility of having a food collection bus at the Library. It was decided that the donations would be on the agenda for Monday and the funds would come from the Gaming fund. The council adjourned to Executive Session at 7:59pm and returned to regular session at 8:05pm and adjourned.