

Athens City Council
Committee Meeting
September 10, 2015

Those in attendance were Mayor Donald Neisler, Clerk Debra Richardson and Aldermen: Anita Bednarko, Ron Canterbury, Tom Croft Sr., Bobbie Dowell and Harry Nichols. Alderman Larry Buhr was absent. Persons in the audience included Zoning Administrator Judi Harlan, Office Manager Karissa Carls, Randy and Linda Wasilewski, Rex Kieffer, Anna Talbit, Michael Armitage, Darin Fritz and Police Chief Tim Becker, Zach Minor and Mike Dirksen.

Mayor Neisler introduced Zach Minor owner of Central Illinois Tree Service.

Minor addressed the council about the infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer that is killing millions of ash trees throughout the United States. Minor stated that the City has numerous ash trees located at the Community Park. Minor introduced retired City of Springfield, Arborist Mike Dirksen to speak on this problem. Dirksen stated that all ash trees would succumb to the borers if not treated. Treatment options are either to remove the tree or treat them with tree injections of insecticide. Dirksen indicated that he drove throughout the City and noticed several infected trees at the Legion Park on Jefferson Street. Dirksen stated that the injections last two to three years and would require future treatments. Dirksen stated that you can start seeing a few dead trees and within seven years they can all be dead. Dirksen stated that Minor is experienced in the treating of the borer, but once the tree is fifty percent infected, it is too late.

Zoning Administrator Judi Harlan addressed the council regarding High Prairie subdivision. Harlan presented the council with the final plat for their review. Harlan stated that the current entrance is a utility easement but she was not sure if the entrance was built before the subdivision was platted. Harlan introduced engineer Mike Irwin from IDOT. Irwin stated that the entrance would not have been approved if it were not there before the subdivision. Darin Fritz stated that at the time Route 29 was resurfaced, he was told that there was no issue with the entrance. Irwin stated that IDOT assumed that the entrance was a City street. Alderman Nichols stated that he remembers seeing a letter from IDOT stating that it was an illegal entrance. Irwin indicated that the City could duplicate the legal entrance and except it as a City street and IDOT would give their blessing. Fritz stated that he did not know how wide a road needed to be. Irwin stated that it would be wide enough. Irwin stated that the City could have any surveyor do the work. Irwin noted that John Higginbotham would have the information. Fritz asked if the City would do a swap of property, does the City street need to be approved first. Irwin stated that there would need to be a plat in the City's name approved first. Irwin asked if the City had ever accepted High Prairie Drive and Zephyr Drive. Alderman Nichols stated that Green and Bradford Inc. would have copies of the plat. Harlan stated that she would check with the County on the recorded plat and see if the plat can be amended. Michael Armitage asked if anyone is checking on the lift station at High Prairie, since the alarm is going off frequently. Mayor Neisler stated that he is not sure how that works.

Harlan stated that Michael Meyer's garage does not have gutters and she has had a complaint on the runoff of water. Harlan indicated that Meyer is working on the front porch, but does not have a building permit to make structural changes. Harlan reported that she has had questions about the garage being built at David Digiovanna's. Harlan stated that he is in compliance with all zoning requirements and has had the property surveyed. Nichols stated that he has had complaints about the moving of heavy equipment and damaging the road. Harlan stated that he has done some damage to the road. Harlan noted that Digiovanna would now be able to store the equipment in a building. Harlan stated that there is a residence on Primm Street that received a building permit for a room addition and they have done more than was approved. Harlan informed the council that this person may need to be fined. Alderman Croft requested that the council be given a monthly list of all building permits. Harlan indicated that there have been seven building permits issued in 2015.

Police Chief Tim Becker presented the police report. Chief Becker stated that all vehicles are up to date on maintenance and that the squad truck would need tires before winter. Chief Becker indicated that he is in the process of looking for a new police vehicle. Chief Becker noted that he would like to purchase two new Tasers, which are approximately \$900.00 each. Chief Becker reported that Brandon Keppler graduated from his police training and passed his certification test. Chief Becker stated that all officers would be attending Domestic Violence Training in Petersburg. Chief Becker indicated that there were four ordinance citations issued in August. Alderman Dowell asked if the incidents on Circle Drive had been brought to the attention of Anne Smith. Chief Becker stated that she was notified and told of damage inside the residence. Alderman Canterbury stated that he had received calls about persons not being able to hear the sirens when they are set off. Alderman Dowell stated that he would like to check into getting more sirens.

Mayor Neisler stated that there was an acid spill at the water plant that has been cleaned up. Mayor Neisler indicated that the engineer has recommended that there be some touching up because of the spill. Mayor Neisler reported that employees are working on the development of a maintenance schedule. Mayor Neisler stated that he found someone to hire as a water plant operator on contract. Michael McCarty is from New Berlin and has toured the water plant with Robin Cawley.

Mayor Neisler stated that the UV lights at the wastewater plant have not been working. Mayor Neisler stated that he called IEPA to let them know about the problem. Mayor Neisler indicated that the engineer that designed the UV lights was at the wastewater plant today and had determined what was wrong. Mayor Neisler reported that employees were pulling the UV lights and there would be a tech coming from the company that manufactured the lights. The tech will be training Robin Cawley. Mayor Neisler stated that he would like to contract with Steven Sanderfield, second in command at Springfield Metro, to sign off on the wastewater plant. He will visit once a week at a cost of \$1,000.00 a month. Mayor Neisler noted that Sanderfield would be training Cawley and help set up a recording system. Alderman Dowell stated that he feels the City should make a record of all the deficiencies at the wastewater plant. Karissa Carls stated that she has found some records in the back room. Mayor Neisler indicated that there were two taps and eighteen shut-off's done.

Chief Becker presented the streets and alley's report. Becker stated that South Main Lane and the West Cemetery road was scarified and packed with a roller. Becker reported that employees have been working on getting the River road ready for the equipment to cap off Well #3. Becker stated that there was oiling and chipping with 150 tons of chips. Becker indicated that a new gate entrance has been completed. Becker stated that the backhoe is in need of new tires. Mayor Neisler recommended the City check with R & H Farm for tires.

Chief Becker reported that the dump truck had been repaired and is being used. Becker stated that he had been getting bids on the purchase of a new dump truck. Becker stated that he has a bid from Morrow Brothers for \$54,880.00. Becker indicated that Morrow Brothers would consider trade ins.

Mayor Neisler stated that he met with a man from Tylex, Inc. to discuss the City purchasing natural gas at a reduced rate. Mayor Neisler noted that if the City had been with Tylex last year, it would have saved \$823.46. Mayor Neisler stated that this is available to the City of Athens as a business. Mayor Neisler indicated that the City would need to make a decision by January 1, 2016.

Karissa Carls addressed the council regarding the renting of the banquet hall. Carls stated that a problem has arisen about the use of the banquet hall by local organizations. Carls indicated that these organizations have never been required to pay a security deposit and she would like for the council to address the fees charged and who is exempt from the fees. Alderman Bednarko asked if the City has a policy. Carls stated that there is a contract that states many of the provisions, but does not cover all circumstances. Alderman Bednarko suggested that the

City always requires a deposit, but the check could be held. Mayor Neisler stated that the City couldn't just hold the check.

Carls reported that the City has been approved as a participant in the IMRF retirement fund. Carls stated that IMRF requested that the City appoint an authorizing agent to oversee the account. Mayor Neisler stated that he would be the authorizing agent and Karissa would manage the user account.

Carls stated that there are four water customers whose meters are located in basements and some of those currently have large unpaid balances. Mayor Neisler stated that the City needed to replace those meters. Carls indicated that she would be organizing Christmas in the Country at the Community Park this year. Carls noted that there is now heightened security for the building, including cameras.

Mayor Neisler stated that Fire Chief Joe Crowe has submitted a hydrant flushing report, which includes locations of hydrants that are inoperable. Mayor Neisler indicated that Mueller and Co. would be having water distribution product training.

Mayor Neisler informed the council that there are thirty-five past customers that have non-active terminated accounts. Mayor Neisler stated that the City's auditor has suggested that the City write off the accounts and in the future stop billing after 90 days. Alderman Dowell stated that the City should retain a list of those persons and not allow them to open accounts in the future without paying their aged accounts in full.

Mayor Neisler reported that the utility locator is not working and employees had to borrow a locator from IMCO. This locator was able to be used for multiple services and indicate how deep the lines are. The cost of the unit is \$4,000.00. Mayor Neisler indicated that J.U.L.I.E. markings could be eighteen inches off the mark. Mayor Neisler recommended that the council authorize the purchase of a new locator.

Alderman Dowell asked if City employees would be available to help with the Fall Festival. Mayor Neisler stated that he would be agreeable to paying employees to help. Dowell indicated that they are expecting very large crowds because of the bands. Dowell stated that he would need employees for emptying trash and moving things around. Dowell reported that there is a group that has offered to clean up afterwards.

Linda Wasilewski stated that the trash containers at the playground at the Community Park needed to be emptied.

Alderman Croft asked about implementing safety measures at the wastewater plant. Mayor Neisler stated that he does not think a fence needs to be installed around the lagoon. He feels that no one would try to get into the sludge, but it does need to be pumped out soon. Chief Becker stated that Cawley had said that the sludge could be sold. Mayor Neisler stated that there are IEPA permits that must be obtained. Mayor Neisler indicated that the City should place signs around the property.

Linda Wasilewski asked if the council would approve of her husband trapping along the Town Branch creek at the wastewater plant for raccoon and coyote. Wasilewski stated that he would be using a steel leg hold trap. Mayor Neisler stated that he did not have a problem with him doing so, but would leave it up to the council.

Council reviewed the bills and meeting adjourned at 9:06 PM.