

Athens City Council  
Committee Meeting  
Thursday, July 9, 2020

Mayor Bob Dowell opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He noted that the seating arrangement was in compliance with social distancing directives. Clerk Cindy McFarland called roll. Those in attendance were Mayor Bob Dowell, and Aldermen: Larry Buhr, Rachel Lantz, Butch Nichols, and Chris Reichert. Alderman Angella Thompson arrived at 7:25pm. Alderman Amy Chernowsky was absent. Persons in the audience included Linda Wasilewski, Office Manager Nicole McCormick, Tom Croft Sr, Alan Keller, Ryan Siefert, Robbie Bluett, Violet Wiker, Ellen Wiker, and Emma Wiker.

Mayor Dowell presented the Police Report and said that we have received the new replacement speed radar sign. The report included recorded high-speed information. Treasurer Ryan Siefert presented the Treasurer's Report. Mayor Dowell said the Streets Report will be available Monday. Next on the agenda was the Water and Sewer Reports. Mayor Dowell said that he had kept the council up to date frequently during the water issues we experienced this last month. During the water emergency, the meter at the wells on the raw service line had broken. The cost was \$7000, and it had to be done right away so the Mayor had approved this emergency purchase. We are still not doing water shut-offs; however, the state may start allowing shut-offs beginning August 1. Sarah, our water clerk has called each customer that is due to be shut-off to let them know. Mayor Dowell said that the meter for measuring elements at Menard Rural Water Distract needs to be replaced. It is starting to read low and we are losing money due to this. The cost is \$725 from Badger Meter. This purchase will be on the agenda for Monday. Linda Wasilewski presented the Cemetery Report. She said that they are still working to get the egg off the monument that was vandalized, and that mowing is going very well. Office Manager Nicole McCormick presented her report and explained that the copier contract is ending in September and requires a 60-day notice to terminate. She provided pricing from the current vendor as well as pricing from a local company which would save the city \$40 per month. This is a one-year contract and the vote to approve the contract will be on the Monday's agenda. The Fleet Report was provided to the council.

Next on the agenda was a presentation from individual city businesses. Emma and Ellen Wiker approached the podium and explained that the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Animal Abuse Protection Program Dog Walk will be held July 26<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 1pm at the Athens Community Park. The event will be a drive by event this year due to COVID-19. The cost is \$5 per dog and each dog will receive a treat bag. The proceeds from the event will go to the new community Micro-Pet Pantry. Emma and Ellen said that a volunteer is building the new pantry at no charge and they asked the council if the pantry could be placed at the park so that all community residents would have access. Community residents can drop off donations at the pet pantry so that people in need can stop by and pick up food for their hungry pets. The council agreed that this would be a good idea. The council thanked the Wikers for their hard work and community involvement.

First on the agenda was Ordinance 01-2020, the annual Road District 13 Appropriation Ordinance, and Ordinance 02-2020, the annual City Appropriation Ordinance. The Mayor asked that the council review these ordinances as the vote to approve will be on the agenda for Monday night.

Next on the agenda was the copy machine lease agreement which had been covered in the office manager's report. The Mayor went on to the next agenda item, explaining that the owner of the property at 400 S. Main had requested that a pipe be installed on his property and covered over in order to prevent the water that runs behind his house from carrying storm run-off and garbage on to his property. The council discussed the issue, and that this is on private property. They agreed that this is a natural waterway and the city will not fill it in.

The next agenda topic was the old Main Street café. Mayor Dowell said that he and Chief Becker had taken a tour of the property with the owner, Tim Rathbone. The Mayor said that the basement is dry, the back wall will be removed and replaced, and there are apartments upstairs. He explained that the owner would like to put fire escapes over the sidewalk on the North side for the apartments. The Mayor checked with Zoning and said there is nothing preventing that. Mayor Dowell said that the owner plans to do stucco and concrete work now and indoor work in the winter. Alderman Nichols said that he would like to see a written plan with a timeline for completion. Alderman Reichert questioned the structural soundness of the building.

Mayor Dowell next explained that a business in Athens had submitted a request to sell beer curbside and to allow workers of at least 19 years of age to sell the alcohol. The city attorney confirmed that an ordinance can be drafted to allow this however other nearby municipalities in Central Illinois have a minimum age of 21 and the attorney recommends against lowering the age. The council discussed the topic and agreed that they would need more clarification about the need for lowering the age before considering any further.

Next the Mayor asked the council to take a look at the water information packet he had provided. He explained that he had reached out to nearby communities, CWLP, and our city engineers in a quest to gather data and financial information in order to prioritize projects needed to improve our water system as well as provide alternatives such as an interconnect, and/or locating grants for infrastructure improvements. The Mayor said that these are all just ideas and he asked the council to think about different options and voice any thoughts they may have for moving forward. The council discussed actions that had been taken in the past, current potential water supply encumbrances, possible solutions and financing options.

Business support information was next on the agenda. Mayor Dowell said that he had heard of other communities that, in order to support businesses during the COVID emergency, had purchased gift certificates from their local businesses and raffled them off. He suggested possibly buying \$25 gift cards, paid from the gaming fund, and raffling them off to our water customers like we do with the weather radios.

Under old business was an update on problem properties. Mayor Dowell said there had been a couple court cases this past month. The Mayor asked if there was any new business. Mayor Dowell then asked Alan Keller to step to the podium. Mr. Keller explained that he is from the Stahl Foundation committee and he has a unique problem in that the committee has to spend money each year for projects in the three parks within the Athens School District. So far, the committee has not received any requests for projects this year. He asked if the city would like to submit an application with some ideas for projects. This could be something like permanent bathrooms. Alderman Buhr suggested replacing the concession stand. Mayor Dowell suggested maybe adding some equipment for the South Park or a small pavilion in honor of the late Alderman Canterbury. Mayor Dowell asked the council if they had any other ideas. Mr. Keller suggested maybe having a committee for next year so we can have ideas ready for the foundation earlier in the year. He also suggested including some youth council members on the committee. Mayor Dowell said that he would like some additional security cameras and, if the council agrees, he will submit an application for the cameras. Applications are available on the city website.

The Mayor asked if anyone had any questions. The council adjourned to Executive Session at 8:32pm and returned to the meeting room to adjourn at 8:50pm.