

Athens City Council
Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 4, 2020
Zoom Meeting ID: 825-300-3670 / Password: Apr9Athens

Mayor Bob Dowell opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. The Meeting was held via Zoom technology due to the COVID-19 Executive Order issued by Governor JB Pritzker. Mayor Dowell called roll. Those in attendance were Mayor Bob Dowell, and Aldermen: Larry Buhr, Amy Chernowsky, Rachel Lantz, Butch Nichols, Chris Reichert, and Angella Thompson. Clerk Cindy McFarland was absent. Persons in the audience included Gary Richardson, Office Manager Nicole McCormick, and Police Chief Tim Becker.

Chief Becker had provided the council with the Police Report. Mayor Dowell asked if anyone had any questions. There were none. There was not a Treasurer's Report provided this month. Next on the agenda was the Streets Report. Mayor Dowell noted that on this report, there is an estimate for tires for the backhoe. The lowest bid was from R & H for \$1200.50. This purchase will be on the voting agenda for Monday's meeting. The council had been provided Water and Sewer Reports. Next on the agenda was the Cemetery Report. Alderman Lantz asked about the vandalism that had been done to the monument at the cemetery. Chief Becker said that he would follow up. Office Manager Nicole McCormick presented her report. She gave an update as to how past due water accounts are being handled. The Fleet Report had been provided to the council. Treasurer Ryan Seifert joined the meeting at this time and gave an update on the meter fund.

Mayor Dowell explained that we will be suspending the presentations from individual city businesses until the Covid-19 emergency has passed.

First on the agenda was an update on Covid-19 future steps. Mayor Dowell said that the park and basketball courts are open. We do not currently have any plans for summer sports leagues. Our bars and restaurants are doing curbside service and practicing social distancing. The lobby at City Hall is still closed. We have not gone to the expense up putting up the plastic divider yet. We have been able to accommodate everyone's needs by appointment. The Mayor asked the council how they felt about keeping the lobby closed at this time. The council agreed that the lobby will remain closed for the time being. The Farmer's Market is open now every Wednesday from 4-7pm. This has been cleared by Public Health. We still cannot have large groups or receptions at this time. One of our businesses in town has applied for one of the State Stimulus COVID grants. This type of grant has quite a few regulations and a rather lengthy packet to complete in order to meet all requirements. If this business is awarded this grant, the city would receive the money and administer it to the business. Most of our other small businesses in town did not meet the requirements for this grant.

Next on the agenda was the topic of a temporary amendment to the Beer Garden Ordinance. Mayor Dowell explained that the Governor has allowed businesses to extend their beer gardens. One of our bars has a very small beer garden and had asked to have it extended. The city complied and allowed them to extend a safe distance without closing off the street. Mayor Dowell asked the council if they thought the Beer Garden ordinance needed to be permanently amended. The council agreed that this would be temporary, and that the amendment was not necessary since the Governor had made this allowance.

The Business Stimulus Plan Awards was next on the agenda. Alderman Reichert explained that seven businesses had applied and six have been approved. The council had approved \$5000 from the Gaming Fund for this award and another \$2,800 had been donated. \$500 was donated anonymously, \$500 was donated by the Athens Senior Class in conjunction with the Boars Nest, and \$1800 was donated by Digiovanna Trucking. This donation was made by Digiovanna Trucking waving

the \$1800 fee that would have been charged to clear the brush and trees on Main Street. \$6,700 of this amount has been awarded. Alderman Reichert suggested that we earmark the remainder in case there is any need for a business shutdown in the future. Alderman Reichert has notified all the businesses and they were very thankful and grateful for this assistance. He said that the American Legion was the only application that was not approved. This is because they are a none for profit and did not meet the business requirements. Alderman Reichert asked that, due to this, he would like to add to Monday's agenda, a vote for a \$1000 donation from the city to the American Legion since they did lose income from not being able to hold their usual dinners and events due to the COVID-19 shutdown. Mayor Dowell did speak to Norm Flowers to explain the 501C issue. The council discussed and agreed that this will be on the agenda for Monday. Alderman Buhr thanked Alderman Reichert and his committee for their hard work on this. Mayor Dowell concurred.

Under old business was an update on problem properties. Mayor Dowell said that on Tuesday, he signed a second cause of action for the property on the corner of Jefferson and Polk Streets. This should fast-track this to court. The Mayor explained that there are several court cases that will be scheduled soon as things open back up. Also, ordinance violations are being issued on a few properties and vehicles. Alderman Nichols asked about the property at 200 W. Washington. The city does have a lien on this property. Chief Becker is following up.

The Mayor asked if anyone had any questions. Alderman Reichert said he had looked over the reports and had a few questions. He asked Chief Becker about the speed radar sign and the problems we have been having. Chief Becker explained that the sign has been returned again and a full refund requested. Once the refund is received, Chief Becker will be prepared to order another one from a different company. Alderman Reichert then asked Office Manager McCormick about the new server for the office. Nicole explained that our server is very old and has become very slow. Mayor Dowell explained that our server was running the risk of losing information and/or being compromised, and he had approved the cost of the new server. Alderman Reichert then said that he had received complaints about the bleeding on Hargrave Street. Mayor Dowell explained that the black rock had worked well on the smaller roads but that we had problems on Hargrave due to the heavier traffic. He said that he hopes that the bleeding is about done and that we should have enough coats of the limestone chip on it now. Alderman Reichert said he would like to thank the city employees for coming out on a Sunday and assisting with the road issues on the day of the school graduation parade. Alderman Nichols said he would like to thank Alderman Reichert for his work on the Business Stimulus Awards, and Alderman Chernowsky for her work on the grants. Alderman Thompson reminded the council to spread the word about the Farmers Market. The meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.