

Athens City Council  
Regular Meeting  
Monday, April 12, 2021

Mayor Bob Dowell opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Police Chief Tim Becker called roll. Those in attendance were Mayor Bob Dowell and Aldermen: Amy Chernowsky, Rachel Lantz, Butch Nichols, Chris Reichert, and Angella Thompson All stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Alderman Lantz presented the Cemetery Report. Ginger Newingham presented the Library Report. There was discussion about the Library budget.

Motion made by Alderman Lantz, seconded by Alderman Chernowsky, to accept the March, 2021 police, treasurers', water, sewer, streets and alleys, fleet maintenance, and office manager's reports. Ayes: Chernowsky, Lantz, Nichols, Reichert, and Thompson. Motion passed.

Mayor Dowell presented an award to Ward 3 Alderman Butch Nichols in appreciation his service and all he has done over the years for our city. Next the Mayor presented a certificate of appreciation to Barbie Gimondo for picking up trash around town and making the town a better place to live. The Mayor also presented an appreciation award to Rex Keiffer for purchasing and cleaning up a problem property and making Athens a better place to live.

Motion made by Alderman Thompson, seconded by Alderman Nichols, to accept the March 2021 council meeting minutes and approve the payment of the March 2021 bills. All ayes. Motion passed.

In order to have a quorum on the new incoming council, our city attorney advised the appointment and swearing in of a replacement for Ward 2 Alderman Larry Buhr. The Mayor introduced Gregg Hoffman and told a little bit about his background. Police Chief Tim Becker swore Alderman Hoffman into the Ward 2 position for a term of 2 years. Alderman Hoffman took a seat at the council table.

License fee adjustments due to Covid restrictions and business closings were next on the agenda. The Mayor asked the council what they recommended. Motion made by Alderman Nichols, seconded by Alderman Thompson, to waive the annual \$540 liquor license fee for the three bars and the gaming parlor for 2020 due to Covid. Ayes: Chernowsky, Lantz, Nichols, Reichert, Thompson, and Hoffman. Motion passed.

Next on the agenda was the Covid Business Stimulus Award. The eBay store was the only applicant for \$1000. Motion made by Alderman Nichols, seconded by Alderman Reichert, to award the \$1000 to the eBay store. All ayes. Motion passed.

A donation for funds for the Glory Days wristbands was next on the agenda. These funds would come from the gaming fund. The wristbands would go to low-income children. Motion made by Alderman Thompson, seconded by Alderman Lantz, to donate \$800 for the wristbands for Glory Days. All ayes. Motion passed.

Next on the agenda was the July 3<sup>rd</sup> Salute to America fireworks display. There was discussion of area businesses sharing the cost of the fireworks display with the city. Motion made by Alderman Reichert, seconded by Alderman Nichols, to make a donation to the Salute to America fireworks display an amount not more than \$3000. This money will come from the gaming fund. All ayes. Motion passed.

This was the end of the voting agenda. Next were discussion topics, beginning with a recap of city information from the last four years. The Mayor summarized past community clean up projects, money savings realized, new businesses coming to our town, grants for park playground improvements and concession stand replacement, Low Prairie entrance completed, a new Veterans Memorial sign, Purple Heart designation, Weather Ready Community working with the fire department, install of black rock on our roads to keep the dust down, a Farmers Market, restructuring of city employees, among many other impressive accomplishments. The Mayor said that we have also suffered some hard losses in our community, including some from our council.

The next discussion topic was the water improvements report and recommendations. Superintendent of Public Works, Derrick Fritz, presented this information. He said that water costs are high and an increase in fees to the water customers is needed. There was discussion about a rate increase and other options. The Mayor said we may need to have a special meeting in regards to a water maintenance fee.

Brush pick-up modifications was next on the agenda. Mayor Dowell said that our employees are spending a lot of time, several days each month, picking up brush around town. Superintendent Fritz explained that brush pick up is done on certain days and sometimes people put their brush out right after their ward has been picked up. Another problem is that people are putting out too big of piles of brush and taking advantage of the service. There was discussion about the frequency of brush pick-ups, possible moving to only once per month.

Last on the discussion agenda was budget information. The Mayor explained that the topic on the top of the second page would need to be discussed in Executive Session. The Mayor asked Superintendent Fritz if there was anything he would like to highlight. Derrick spoke about the possibility of restructuring bonds, borrowing more money, the cost of wells, and needed improvements at the water plant. Alderman Nichols explained the financial ramifications of extending out the bonds. The Mayor asked the council to look over the budget and ask questions.

Mayor Dowell asked if anyone had any questions or comments. There were none. Council adjourned at 8:25pm.