

Athens City Council
Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 4, 2021

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: Amy Chernowsky (via Zoom), Rachel Lantz, Butch Nichols, Chris Reichert, and Angella Thompson. Persons in the audience included Public Works Superintendent Derrick Fritz, Police Chief Tim Becker, Gary Richardson, Linda Wasilewski, Tom Croft Sr, Taylor Lowe, and Lindsey Bosie.

Chief Becker presented the Police Report. He said delivery of the new squad car is expected to be mid to late April. Officer Morgan Gum has expressed his desire to return to full-time farming and transfer to being a part-time police officer effective April 1, 2021. The plan is to cover our existing schedule utilizing our current full-time and part-time officers, and not to replace Morgan's full-time position. Mayor Dowell presented the Treasurer's report. He said the Streets report will be available Monday. Mayor Dowell presented the Water report and said the Sewer report would be available Monday. There will be a Cemetery meeting Monday before the next Council meeting. Mayor Dowell presented the Office Manager's report. He said meter shut-offs are scheduled for Tuesday, March 9 and there are currently 86 water customers that are past due. Public Works Superintendent Fritz presented the Fleet Maintenance Report. There was no Library report this month.

First on the discussion agenda was information from our city Engineer. Mayor Dowell explained that we were finally able to meet with our engineers and go over quite a bit of information. Water rate study information that we had to complete and send to Rural Water has been done, audit information sent to our bonding company is done, and ordinance rate information is done. Our engineers said that the Rural Water Association is probably someone we will get to know well during this to explore options and gain knowledge. Derrick and Michael went with the Engineer to the water plant. Public Works Superintendent Derrick Fritz said that Brotcke Well and Pump are coming out tomorrow to get moving on test wells. The engineer did not have good news on possibly having a well on this side of the river. We may have to purchase property, easements, or something to have a well on this side of the river. Mayor Dowell explained that we had moved \$25,000 from the Gaming fund a couple months ago to cover Brotcke's expense for well drilling. Once this is all over and done with and we go over the bonding issues, we will return the money to the Gaming fund. Mayor Dowell said that Kevin Kuhn brought a financial expert out to look at possibly restructuring our bond at a better rate. Alderman Nichols asked if that would carry our bond out further. Mayor Dowell said yes, but that would get us two new wells, an intake feed line, and hopefully some other improvements. Alderman Nichols expressed some concern with carrying out the bond further. Mayor Dowell continued, saying that the good thing about restructuring the bond would be that the payment would stay level and not graduate each time. This would be borrowing an additional million and a half dollars. If we go with this plan, the council would be provided all information. This will be several months in the making. Alderman Reichert added that this allows for money for long term expenses. Mayor Dowell said that he wanted to touch on the city audit. He said it was mostly a clean audit. He did explain to the council that the Certificate of Deposit amount noted on page 32 actually belongs to the West Cemetery and the Library, and these funds are not available to the city.

Next on the agenda was an update from AYSA on the concession stand project. Darren Humphres is gathering more information and will present next month. Alderman Thompson gave an update on the 2021 Farmers Market. She explained that the school board had given approval to hold the market in the high school parking lot. There is a lot of interest from several different vendors. We are opening up to include craft people and other kinds of artisans. Liability insurance is required for food items. Applications and information are available on the market Facebook page.

Up next was the update on the 2021 Glory Days presented by Lyndsey Bosie and Taylor Lowe. The event will kick off Thursday, May 13 with a ribbon cutting at the park at 5pm. Lyndsey went over the event schedule, carnival, wrist bands, and sponsorships. The band this year is the Devin Clemons band. A new large stage has been purchased so the band will be moved away from the pavilion allowing for more seating and social distancing. Taylor presented information on the pageant, fundraising, and the parade. More information is available on the Athens Glory Days Facebook page.

Last on the agenda was Covid business assistance information. The application for this assistance is available on the city website. It is open for two weeks. There has been very little interest. Mayor Dowell also said that Alderman Buhr's open seat on the council had been offered to his wife, Holly Henning-Buhr, but she had declined. There is no need to fill this seat at this time since Alderman Buhr's term is up at the end of April.

The Mayor asked if there was any new business. Linda Wasilewski said that mowing would begin soon at the cemetery. Under old business, problem properties, Mayor Dowell said that one case is in court. Also, we are meeting with two realtors next week to discuss listing our properties. Alderman Thompson asked why we do not allow manufactured homes in town. Derrick explained that we do not get property tax from them if they are not on a foundation. Mayor Dowell said that the council may want to look at restructuring that ordinance with strict regulations.

The council adjourned to 8:10pm.