

Athens City Council  
Committee Meeting  
Thursday, September 10, 2020

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: Larry Buhr, Amy Chernowsky, Rachel Lantz, Butch Nichols, and Angella Thompson. Alderman Chris Reichert was absent. Persons in the audience included Linda Wasilewski, Gary Richardson, Rick Freer, Ryan Siefert, Robbie Bluett, Derrick Fritz, Hayley Yoakum, Michael Lockwood, Ryne Crowe, and Ellie Crowe. Before beginning report presentations, Mayor Dowell read a moving tribute to those lost on 9-11. Let us not forget.

Sgt. Fritz presented the Police Report and recorded speed information gathered from the radar sign which had been placed on Madison Street and West Jackson Street. Several people had comments about the numerous kids riding bikes or out walking after curfew, and golf carts speeding in town. Sgt. Fritz explained that our officers have been instructed to notify the kids' parents when they are out after curfew and get them involved. DCFS can also be notified for cases of inadequate supervision. Sgt. Fritz said to call the police when speeders are witnessed. Sgt. Fritz also presented the Fleet Maintenance report. Treasurer Ryan Siefert presented the Treasurer's Report. Ryne Crowe gave information on his plan to pick up brush and handle projects by ward. Michael Lockwood presented the Water Report and Robbie Bluett presented the Sewer report. Alderman Lantz presented the Cemetery Report. Mayor Dowell presented the Office Manager's report. He explained that water disconnects and penalties that had been halted due to COVID, can resume this month. Certified letters were sent on 9/8/2020 to the 14 people that are seriously delinquent. This letter informs the person that they need to call city hall immediately to set up a payment plan or they will be disconnected in 15 days. They would then be required to pay either half or the full amount of their balance, depending on their account status and what they have paid so far, plus the \$100 reconnect fee. The water clerk has also made several attempts to contact these delinquent customers by phone.

First on the discussion agenda was information about a public meeting to be held on Monday, September 14, 2020. The Mayor explained that the Zoning Board of Appeals will consider two zoning applications at this meeting and all interested persons are invited to attend.

Next the Mayor said that he had been contacted by the new owners of the Village Market. They are asking for an amended liquor license so that they can add gaming machines in the store. The Mayor explained that in order to have gaming, the market would either need to have a pouring liquor license or become a truck stop. Mayor Dowell asked the council what they thought about a pouring liquor license for the store. Alderman Lantz said that we already have enough bars in town. Aldermen Nichols and Buhr said that they thought that we already have enough liquor licenses in town. Mayor Dowell said that he would contact the owners of the market to let them know.

The next agenda topic was the recent vandalism at the park and possibly new rules for the park. Mayor Dowell summarized some of the damage done at the park and asked the council what they thought about a rule or possibly an ordinance stating that anybody under the age of 16 years old must be accompanied by an adult to supervise them at the park. Mayor Dowell explained that the people who were identified on camera as the vandals have been banned from the park for a year. So far, seven juveniles and four adults have been banned. We are working with the Stahl Foundation to get more cameras added at the park. Alderman Lantz questioned if the reason that we would have an ordinance would be that so we would have other options than banning the vandals? Mayor Dowell said yes. Alderman Buhr said we have 12 and 13-year-old kids who like to come to play at the park after school and they would not be able to do this if their parents could not come with them. Alderman Lantz asked if we could fine the offenders. Mayor Dowell said that those guilty of the damage have

reimbursed the city for the repairs. Alderman Nichols said that we currently have a rule at the park that no one is allowed at the park after dusk and we definitely need to be enforcing this. Alderman Thompson said that we do not want to punish everyone for the actions of a few. Mayor Dowell agreed that we are not against kids playing at the park or riding their bikes, but we also don't want damage to the park or anyone getting hurt.

Last on the agenda was a COVID update. Mayor Dowell had already covered the update on the water bills. As to the previous Small Business Stimulus Funds that the city had provided to support small businesses in our town, two of the small businesses that had accepted the funds have since moved their businesses out of our town. Mayor Dowell said that was not what the funds were intended for.

Mayor Dowell asked if anyone had anything else. Alderman Lantz asked about a crop easement outside of town on Post Road. Mayor Dowell answered that this would be a county issue.

Under old business was an update on problem properties. Mayor Dowell said the property west of the American Legion had moved a lot of stuff out, but it looks like they are moving more stuff in. We will continue to monitor. The properties on Jefferson and Washington have been mowed and fines and levies have been issued.

The Mayor asked if there was anything else. Linda Wasilewski approached the podium and suggested that the city hire a professional company to take down the dead trees at the park. Mayor Dowell said that Ryne, the Streets Supervisor, is going to handle this. The council adjourned to Executive Session at 7:48pm and returned to the meeting room at 8:13pm. Mayor Dowell said that the week of September 17-23, 2020 has been proclaimed as Constitution Week. He also added that the vote for Halloween trick-or-treating hours will be on the agenda for Monday. Council adjourned at 8:15 pm.