

MINUTES OF MEETING, ATHENS CITY COUNCIL, NOVEMBER 4, 2013

The Athens City Council met in called session on November 4, 2013, at 5:00 p.m. with Mayor Buttram presiding. The invocation was given by Vice Mayor Davis; and upon roll call, the following members were present:

Burris, Pelley, Perkinson, Davis, Buttram

The following decision was made and ordered made a part of the records of the Athens City Council.

The purpose of the meeting, as issued in the "Notice of Called Meeting" dated October 23, 2013, was read and made a part of these minutes:

NOTICE OF CALLED MEETING

There will be a called meeting of the Athens City Council on Monday, November 4, 2013, at 5:00 p.m. in the Athens Municipal Building Training Room located at 815 North Jackson Street for the purpose of considering a Rails-to-Trails Interlocal Agreement.

/s/

R. Hal Buttram, Mayor

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NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION NO. 2013-37

A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN MCMINN COUNTY, THE CITY OF ATHENS AND THE TOWN OF ENGLEWOOD FOR THE OPERATION OF A RAILS TO TRAILS PROJECT.

The caption of Resolution No. 2013-22 was read by the recording clerk. **A motion was made by Council Member Perkinson, seconded by Vice Mayor Davis, to approve Resolution No. 2013-37.** Mayor Buttram stated the Interlocal Agreement being considered had been approved by both McMinn County and the Town of Englewood. Council Member Burris stated that he had talked to many people about Rails to Trails and only two to three percent were for this project. The rest were against it because the City was going to spend \$30,000 on Phase I of this project and then ask for either a sales tax or property tax increase. The School Board was even talking about consolidating schools. He stated that he was not against the trail but was against placing a \$30,000 burden on the residents. Council Member Perkinson stated this was an opportunity of a lifetime. Everything he had read about rails to trails projects across the state and the country indicated that they are very beneficial. He noted property taxes have not been increased in 16 years and the City had capital funds available for projects like this one. Council Member Pelley agreed with Council Member Burris that he did not want to put a burden on the taxpayers. The City already had trails and it was struggling to maintain the existing streets, sidewalks, parks and trails. Council Member Pelley found very few people that supported the rails to trails project. He rose in opposition to the motion because he did not think the City of Athens needed to be involved. Mayor Buttram stated that the proposed tax increase would go towards taking care of the maintenance of streets, sidewalks, parks and trails. The \$30,000 is a capital expenditure much like those used for other infrastructure projects such as development of the industrial park where HP Pelzer is now located. This was an opportunity to provide this type of recreation facility for industry and citizens to look at when visiting this area. Council Member Burris commented that very little of the rails to trails is in the City. The Interlocal Agreement states that the County may help offset maintenance costs up to \$1,000 per trail mile per year. It does not say it will pay. If people really want this trail, let them donate money. He was willing to donate money. What will people coming into this community think if we increase sales taxes and close schools but spend money on trails? Vice Mayor Davis stated that she too had talked to several people and the people she had spoken to were in favor of this project with the exception of one. She felt this trail was a tremendous opportunity and they did not have to go out for the money as it was already in the capital improvement fund. She remarked that

according to Beth Jones, Executive Director of the Southeast Tennessee Development District, industries looking to relocate are bringing their families with them and they are looking at livability projects such as walking, biking and hiking opportunities. Council Member Pelley stated that he too would be willing to donate money to rails to trails. He felt that the Regional Park and other City parks were not in good shape and it was a struggle to maintain them but felt Athens was the epitome of livability. Upon conclusion of the discussion, the resolution was approved by the following roll call vote:

**AYES:**        **Perkinson, Davis, Buttram**  
**NAYS:**       **Burris, Pelley**  
**ABSENT:**    **None**

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the meeting and upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

  
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MITCHELL B. MOORE, City Manager

  
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R. HAL BUTTRAM, Mayor