

MINUTES OF MEETING, ATHENS CITY COUNCIL, JULY 18, 2017

The Athens City Council met in regular session on Tuesday, July 18, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. with Mayor Burris presiding. The invocation was given by Vice Mayor Pelley; and upon roll call, the following members were present:

Coker, Perkinson, Raper, Pelley, Burris

The following decisions were made and ordered made a part of the records of the Athens City Council.

Vice Mayor Pelley asked for a point of personal privilege to apologize to the citizens of Athens and City Council. At the recent Study Session he made an egregious error and used a bad word. He asked that they please accept his apology.

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MINUTES

The Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of June 20, 2017 was submitted and approved by unanimous consent.

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COMMUNICATIONS

PRESENTATION OF PROCLAMATION TO ASHLEY ROGERS – ALL AMERICAN SOFTBALL

Vice Mayor Pelley presented Ashley Rogers with a proclamation congratulating her on being named to the American Family Insurance ALL-USA High School Second Team and having earned the distinction of becoming an All-American in softball. Ashley was also recognized for her academic achievements. Ms. Rogers thanked the Athens City Council, Fairview Christian Academy, Meigs County High School and everyone who has supported her as this was an incredible honor.

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PRESENTATION OF PROCLAMATION – PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH

Council Member Raper presented a proclamation declaring the month of July 2017 as Parks and Recreation Month to staff of the Parks and Recreation Department.

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EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER PRESENTATION

C. Seth Sumner, City Manager, presented the "Employee of the Quarter" award for the period ending June 30, 2017 to Patrol Officer Jamie Carmack.

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MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE

Mayor Burris acknowledged receipt of a thank you note from Patti and Jim Greek to the Athens Fire Department for saving downtown Athens on July 1, 2017; a very touching letter from an 80-year old woman regarding the kindness Patrol Officer Landon Thompson showed to her when she had misplaced the keys to her car; and a thank you letter William and Elizabeth Ruleman to City Manager Sumner for his assistance with an ongoing issue.

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PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

AUDIENCE

Mayor Burris opened the meeting for petitions and requests from the audience. Eric Morrow, 1400 Bell Street, asked the City Council to discuss term limits at their next regularly scheduled study session. Mr. Morrow also asked if there was a way to “beef up” the City’s Wi-Fi signal for live streaming of the meetings. Linda Long spoke about the conditions at Cook Park and asked for betterments to be made to the park.

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REPORTS

FINANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Mr. Michael Keith, Finance Director, presented the Finance Department Report for the month of June 2017. The report was accepted as presented.

City Manager Sumner announced the Finance Department had received the Government Finance Officers Association "Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting" for fiscal year ended June 30, 2016. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by government and its management. This marked the 25th consecutive year the City has received this award.

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POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Interim Chief Rob Davis presented the Police Department Report for the month of June 2017. The report was accepted as presented.

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FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Chief Jim Dyer presented the Fire Department Report for the month of June 2017. The report was accepted as presented.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Mr. Anthony Casteel, Community Development Director, presented the Building Permit Quarterly Report for the City of Athens. The report was accepted as presented.

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CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Burris advised that the following items were discussed during the recent study session and are presented as a part of the Consent Agenda. The recording clerk read the items into the record:

- a.) Reappoint Jona Garrett to the Athens Regional Planning Commission, term expires August 18, 2020.
- b.) Reappoint Tom Hughes to the Athens Utilities Board, term expires June 30, 2021.
- c.) Appoint Laura LeNoir to fill vacancy on the Historic Preservation Commission, term expires October 1, 2021.

- d.) Resolution 2017-14 authorizing City Manager to execute and administer an Interlocal Agreement for employment of a Public Management Fellow.
- e.) Resolution 2017-15 authorizing a waiver of permit fees for a Habitat for Humanity home to be constructed at 500 Walthall Street.
- f.) Resolution 2017-16 authorizing City Manager to submit an application for a 2017-18 TML "Safety Partners" Matching Grant Program (50/50 match).
- g.) Resolution 2017-17 amending the Community Development Fee Schedule.

**A motion was made by Council Member Coker, seconded by Mayor Burris, to address the Consent Agenda items individually.** Items a.), c.), e.), f.), and g.) were approved by the following roll call votes:

**AYES: Coker, Perkinson, Raper, Pelley, Burris**  
**NAYS: None**

Council Member Coker stated he had no problem reappointing Tom Hughes to the Athens Utilities Board. Mr. Hughes had done a fine job serving on this Board and will continue to do a fine job. Council Member Coker said he received several phone calls from citizens after their study session stating they did not realize the City had a problem getting individuals to apply for boards/committees and asked him where they could go to get an application. He did not feel the Council was pulling the applications on file and studying them to see if there were qualified people that had applied for this position. He felt it sent a message to the public that there was no use filling out an application as the Council had already selected the person they wanted to go on to the Board. This was the only issue he had with this appointment and the reason he declined to vote. In his opinion, the City Council did not do its job. There were other qualified individuals. After a brief discussion, Item b.) was approved by the following roll call vote:

**AYES: Perkinson, Raper, Pelley, Burris**  
**NAYS: None**  
**ABSTAIN: Coker**

Vice Mayor Pelley stated he had no problem with the concept of an intern, his problem was with the \$66,773 in salary, benefits and travel to be paid to the intern. The salary might be good for someone working for the University of Tennessee but it was too high for someone working in Athens. He would have no problem paying someone \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year including benefits and travel. City Manager Sumner explained that these were not to exceed amounts and were based on standard pay. This individual would be an employee of the University of Tennessee and not a City of Athens employee. They are basing the salary off of the duties of this individual and the capabilities required to fulfill the role. The actual salary is capped at \$43,721.60. Previously they were paying the former individual a salary of over \$57,000/year, which is a \$14,000 decrease to get to this position. City Manager Sumner stated he felt that this was a fair salary based on the individual's educational background and skills to give to the City for two years. Hopefully, this individual will develop into someone that will possibly remain with the City or go out and become a city manager. There is a restructuring of the duties of that position because of the informal positions the former employee was filling for the city. The individual needs a technical background and expertise. City Manager Sumner stated his plan was to make some of those informal duties formal. He had moved risk management over to Human Resources and was still considering whether to privatize that function. After brief discussion, the resolution was approved by the following roll call vote:

**AYES: Coker, Perkinson, Raper, Burris**  
**NAYS: Pelley**

ORDINANCE NO. 1064 – SECOND/FINAL READING – PUBLIC HEARING

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ATHENS, TENNESSEE, PROVIDING THAT THE ATHENS MUNICIPAL CODE, TITLE 14, CHAPTER 2, SECTION 3.04.08.C USES PERMITTED ON REVIEW BE AMENDED; TO ADD MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL USES; AND PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The caption of the above-described Ordinance was read by the recording clerk. Mayor Burris opened the public hearing. There being no one present wishing to discuss the Ordinance, Public Hearing was closed. **A motion was made by Vice Mayor Pelley, seconded by Council Member Perkinson, to approve Ordinance No. 1064 on Second and Final Reading.** Ordinance No. 1064 was approved by the following roll call vote:

**AYES: Coker, Perkinson, Raper, Pelley, Burris**  
**NAYS: None**

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NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT AND DESIGNATE THE FUNDING SOURCE FOR THE CONSULTANT ON ATHENS CITY SCHOOLS BUILDING PROGRAM.

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-18

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS/QUALIFICATIONS TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT TO AID IN THE DISCOVERY OF FACTS AND NEEDS IN REGARD TO A PROPOSED ATHENS CITY SCHOOLS BUILDING PROGRAM AND DESIGNATING THE FUNDING SOURCE FOR SAID CONSULTANT.

**Motion was made by Council Member Perkinson, seconded by Council Member Coker, to approve Resolution No. 2017-18.** Council Member Perkinson stated he felt this was arguably the largest decision the City of Athens has ever faced in its history. He felt Athens City Schools had done an admirable job in doing their part by offering options, reviewing the buildings they have, and all of the different criteria that goes into a decision for making construction plans, etc. for Athens City Schools. By State law, it now becomes the City's responsibility to determine the direction of funding and understanding all elements of it. This is going to be at least a thirty year if not a fifty year decision. Council Member Perkinson felt it was wise and prudent on their part to hire a consultant to help them go through all the issues that need to be looked at relative to this decision. Vice Mayor Pelley rose in opposition to hiring a consultant. He felt it was a waste of time and money. It only delays the inevitable. He spoke with an Oak Ridge City Council member about Oak Ridge Schools. Ten years ago Oak Ridge dealt with the same issue they were dealing with now only theirs was sixty million dollars for one building. In their deliberations with their School Board, the City Council was provided with all the information they needed to make a decision. Vice Mayor Pelley did not feel that a consultant would afford them any answers that they did not already have. He recommended they have a joint meeting with Athens City Schools every week, if necessary, to answer the questions that the Council had but don't pay for a consultant. Mayor Burris stated the School Board has done a great job. They had given the Council what they needed to know with regard to the schools but that was not the point. The Council has to find out how they are going to pay for it. He asked the Council if they had a solution on how to pay the estimated fifty million dollars for these schools. Vice Mayor Pelley stated that in meeting with Oak Ridge he was told there were several things they did in addition to a sales tax referendum, which passed and was usurped by the county. Oak Ridge set up a non-profit education committee that raised ten million dollars. This type of committee can approach individuals, write grants, and help the City fund the project. He did not feel the City needed a consultant and felt the Council just needed to work as a team with the School Board. They needed to get creative as they move forward. Mayor Burris stated that when he was at the Elected Officials Academy with Council Member Coker, he asked other officials in attendance if their agency had gone through this type of process. Roane County officials stated they were closing three high schools and building one major high school for approximately one hundred million dollars. He was told the first thing they did was hire a consultant. The School Board had done their job; the issue now was how the City was going to pay for what the School Board was requesting. Council Member Coker agreed with Mayor Burris. He did not feel they needed a consultant to tell them whether or not the School Board had done their job right. The Council needed a consultant to help them determine how they were going to afford what was needed to take on this project. In response to an inquiry from Council Member Coker, Finance Director Mike Keith stated a sales tax increase would bring in approximately 1.6 or 1.7 million dollars a year. A property tax increase would also be needed.

An increase of one cent on the tax rate would generate approximately \$40,000. To fund the amount requested by Athens City Schools, the additional increase in the property tax rate would need to be 33 cents, which is approximately a 25 to 30 percent increase. At the conclusion of the discussion, the resolution was approved by the following roll call vote:

**AYES:** Coker, Perkinson, Raper, Burris  
**NAYS:** Pelley

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MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Sumner stated he had several items he wanted to share. The first item was in regard to the unprecedented response the City had with regard to the fire at the Logan building downtown. The first call came in at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 1, 2017 and they had an immediate response to it. The fire captain on the scene made a crucial and critical call that most likely turned the day in their favor. The firefighters had water but they needed electrolytes so they made the call on television for Gatorade and within minutes they had cases being delivered. Those actions were reflective of a community that cares and works together. The thing that he was most proud of was that with over a hundred firefighters and individuals on the ground downtown, the property owners, and the people that were woken up from their beds that morning, there was not a single injury. He thanked the agencies that responded to the call for assistance and the citizens and businesses that made donations.

City Manager Sumner noted the Council Advisory Committee had met on July 17<sup>th</sup> to create a list of questions on the School Building Program as directed by the City Council. The Chairman will bring that report to the August Study Session. The report is being compiled and it should be a good base of questions to help the School Board and City Council understand what citizens' concerns are with the Schools Building Program. They will use that list as a reference and a guide to help them build upon when hiring a consultant, to give the consultant direction to know what the questions are, what the issues in the community are, and to help them find the datasets that can answer those questions for the citizens and elected officials.

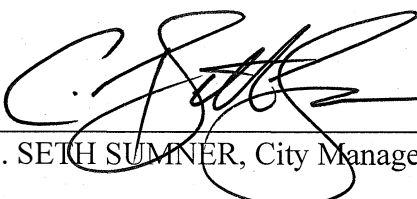
Earlier in the day, members of the City Council and City Manager joined others at DENSO to celebrate their 20 years in Athens. DENSO is the city's largest employer with 1,409 positions. They took a tour of the facility. When you think of manufacturing, you think of dirty manufacturing jobs especially when you think of automotive manufacturing. This facility was spotless. The type of corporate culture that they have built and are continuing to grow was amazing. City Manager Sumner stated he had made a lot of mental notes for the City as he looks to grow our culture as we grow as an employer. The celebration ended at the Eco Park. Under the pavilion there are two new signs posted with the logos of all the entities that took place in the development and funding of that park, which DENSO took the lead on.

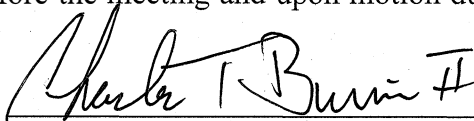
City Manager Sumner reviewed the various Public Works' projects and Parks and Recreation activities going on throughout the city as presented in his monthly report.

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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 8:28 p.m.

  
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C. SETH SUMNER, City Manager

  
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CHARLES T. BURRIS, II, Mayor