

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL MINUTES OF MEETING

May 27, 2020

The Athens City Council met in called session on May 27, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. with Mayor Burris presiding. This meeting was held pursuant to Governor Bill Lee's Executive Order # 16, allowing the virtual attendance of council members, and CDC/White House guidelines limiting the number of the group present. The City of Athens upholds its citizens right to witness their legislative body in action and provided this meeting by livestream and the ability to physically attend. The invocation was given by Council Member Lockmiller; and upon roll call, the following members were present:

Coker, Lockmiller, Pelley, Perkinson, Burris

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 May 27, 2020, 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 Wednesday, May 27, 2020, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Athens Municipal Building located at 815 North Jackson Street. The purpose of the meeting is:

1. To consider on first reading any ordinances to adopt a budget for the City of Athens and set the tax rate for fiscal year July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.



Charles T. Burris, II, Mayor

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NEW BUSINESS

PROPOSED BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021

ORDINANCE NO. 1088 - FIRST READING

AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT A BUDGET AND SET THE TAX RATE ON TAXABLE PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF ATHENS, TENNESSEE, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2021.

The caption of Ordinance No. 1088 was read by the recording clerk. Mayor Burris asked City Manager Sumner to clarify the budget that was before them. City Manager Sumner stated the budget before them includes the addition of two positions – Police Detective and Deputy Fire Chief. They are taking \$120,000 from funds that would have been moved to capital projects to fund those two positions. There is no tax rate increase in the proposed budget. The City Council does set the tax rate annually with the adoption of the budget. There was a previously proposed \$.08 tax increase that had been in conversations for several years that would be needed to fund the debt service for the school building project. That \$.08 property tax increase was removed from consideration and the \$400,000 that would have been moved to capital projects was now needed to fund that debt service. The Council was presented with a balanced budget without a property tax increase. **Motion was made by Mayor Burris, seconded by Vice Mayor Perkinson, to approve Ordinance No. 1088 on first reading.** Vice Mayor Perkinson asked those members of the Council that previously voted against a property tax increase, when were they were proposing to increase the tax rate to get the City back on track. Council Member Coker responded that he would vote to increase the tax rate when the funds were needed. He stated

that last week they learned that this was going to be a construction loan. They would be paying on the debt service as they were borrowing the funds for the project. The City would be relieving the pressure on the taxpayers this fiscal year. A discussion followed on adopting a property tax rate increase in the future. City Manager Sumner advised the City Council of a violation of the Open Meetings Act. Mayor Burris stopped the discussion as Council Member Pelley had removed his headphones and was on his cell phone unable to hear the discussion. City Manager Sumner went to the camera so Council Member Pelley could see him signal to hang up the phone. Council Member Pelley placed his headphones back on and Mayor Burris asked him not to use his cell phone during the meeting. Council Member Pelley apologized to the Council. The discussion resumed. City Manager Sumner stated he had received verbal affirmation from all five council members that the budget before them was acceptable with the two positions added. He noted there was issue taken with increasing property taxes on our citizens at this time although it had been a conversation in the community for the past two years knowing that this would be the time to raise property taxes to fund the debt service for Phase I of the school building project. No one foresaw the pandemic and we still don't know the full economic damage. He urged any council member that felt strongly towards increasing property taxes at this time, to offer an amendment to the motion. He also urged the Council to move forward with consideration of this budget as presented. Upon conclusion of the discussion and upon roll call, the motion was approved by the following vote:

AYES: Coker, Lockmiller, Perkinson, Burris
NAYS: Pelley

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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 10:54 a.m.



C. SETH SUMNER, City Manager



CHARLES T. BURRIS, II, Mayor