

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL MINUTES OF MEETING

May 21, 2024

The Athens City Council met in regular session on Tuesday, May 21, at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Sherlin presiding. The invocation was given by Mayor Sherlin; and upon roll call, the following members were present:

Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

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

- 1 -

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Curtis moved, Vice Mayor Eaton seconded to approve the minutes of the April 16, 2024, regularly scheduled meeting. Roll call vote:

AYES: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: None

-2-

COMMUNICATION AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

CITY MANAGER

City Manager Deb Wallace addressed the Council. She gave her formal resignation due to personal and familial family situation. It was not an easy decision; however, her resignation is effective June 30, 2024.

Mayor Sherlin addressed City Manager Wallace and commended her for doing a great job for the City of Athens. He said the Council does not vote on it, but they do accept her resignation.

Some Council members and City Attorney Caldwell expressed their gratitude to her and the job she has done as City Manager.

Mayor Sherlin said they will deal with the appointment of an interim city manager at the work session in June. If they have the need to, they will have a called meeting prior to that. He has two names that were sent to them by MTAS for interim along with one additional name that was sent to him by an individual in the city. He asked the council to look over them and reach out to them if they felt the need. When they meet, they will discuss their applications. He asked the Council if they have any recommendations, submit

them. They will also decide whether to form a search committee or conduct the search themselves with the assistance of MTAS to help screen and test the individuals that may be at the top of the list for consideration. Without opposition, that will be the process.

Dr. Pelley objected. He suggested they start moving forward now and have a called meeting as soon as possible.

Mike Keith reminded the mayor about advertising. He said if they want to wait and do it under new business that would be fine.

Mayor Sherlin said they will go ahead and take care of it. With the consent of the Council, they would like to go ahead and place an advertisement for the city manager's job and let that begin on May 22, 2024, with a date of June 30, 2024, for applications to be submitted to the city. There were no objections.

-3-

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS

Mayor Sherlin addressed the audience and Council. He read the Civil Contract for Citizens.

Three (3) individuals addressed the Council expressing concerns about pending First Amendment lawsuit; lighting, tables, shade structures and parking at Cook Park and the provisions be made for it in the 2024-2025 budget; attorneys and confidentiality claims.

- 4 -

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Sherlin advised the recording clerk to read the following items into the record:

- a) Transfer Westside School back to Athens City Schools.
- b) Approve health insurance renewal as submitted by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024.
- c) Approve purchase of front loader garbage truck utilizing Source Well Cooperative purchasing agreement.
- d) Approve Kimley Horn to provide professional services for Safe Streets For All grant.
- e) Approve paving project changes; remove Sweetfield Valley Road and add Tellico from Madison Avenue to the city limits.
- f) Approve dispatching services agreement with McMinn County Emergency Communications District.
- g) Appoint Barbara Peck to Council Advisory Committee.
- h) Appoint Ashley Smith to the Library Board.
- i) Add 1 (one) part-time IT (Information Technology) position to the position classification plan for the current fiscal year.

Vice Mayor Eaton moved, Council Member Curtis seconded, that the Consent Agenda as stated be approved. Council Member Witt-McMahan asked if Kimley Horn was a consulting firm and not staff. The reply was correct. Roll call:

AYES: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin.

NAYS: None

- 5 -

ORDINANCES

There were no ordinances.

Vice Mayor Eaton took the floor and requested that the Veteran's Parade be put on the June agenda.

Mayor Sherlin said it would be put on the June agenda.

- 6 -

NEW BUSINESS

Purchase of property for fire station 3 (three).

Fire Chief Ainsworth chose not to speak about this. He said they are waiting for some additional information. Council member Witt-McMahan asked if they found something that they thought was going to be good. Chief Ainsworth said yes. Mayor Sherlin said it would be put on the work session agenda for June.

- 7 -

Approve Resolution 2024-10, amending the charter for the City of Athens, Tennessee.

Council Member Curtis moved, Council Member Witt-McMahan seconded to approve the amending the charter for the City of Athens, Tennessee.

Vice-Mayor Eaton said every city municipality, county, federal, and state needs to do this. They need term limits, and he appreciates everyone's hard work.

Mayor Sherlin said the legislature did approve these amendments. They have the paperwork; it needs to be signed and sent back to them. As soon as it is signed it becomes law, their charter, and the charter changes will be made in accordance.

Roll call:

AYES: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Eaton, Sherlin.
NAYS: Pelley

- 8 -

Approve Resolution 2024-11 for donations to charitable organizations.

Council Member Curtis moved; Council Member Witt-McMahan seconded to approve the donations for charitable organizations.

Mayor Sherlin opened for discussion. He read from page 50 (fifty) of the packet. He read as follows: Whereas, Table Graces and the Tennessee Wesleyan Love thy Neighbor Project, provides services to feed those in need. Whereas, the Mid-East Tennessee Community Chorus, the McMinn County Education Foundation, and the McMinn County Historical Society provide services in the City of Athens, for the benefit of its citizens. Whereas, the City of Athens wishes to contribute amounts to the following agencies: \$5000.00 to Table Graces; \$5000.00 to Tennessee Wesleyan Love thy Neighbor Project; \$5000.00 to the Mid-East Tennessee Community Chorus; \$6700.00 to the McMinn County Education Foundation; and \$6000.00 to the McMinn County Historical Society. Now therefore be it resolved by the Council of the City of Athens, Tennessee, as follows, that the recitals above are true and accurate, and form a part of this resolution, and that meeting in regular session this twenty-first day of May, 2024, city council authorizes the distribution of funds to agencies listed above and the funds will be provided to each entity prior to the June 30, 2024.

Mayor Sherlin made the disclaimer that he is on the board of the McMinn Historical Society. He has no financial interest other than being a board member and paying his dues.

Roll Call:

AYES: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin
NAYS: None

- 9 -

Proposed City of Athens Budget for 2024-2025.

Council Member Curtis moved; Vice Mayor Eaton seconded to approve the City of Athens Budget for 2024-2025.

Mayor Sherlin asked for discussion.

Vice Mayor Eaton said the only thing is, the outside entities are not in this.

Mayor Sherlin said the outside 501's, there will be a new application process for them.

Mr. Keith said, yes, for the ones seeking the Hotel/Motel tax.

Council Member Witt-McMahan asked if these were current recipients.

Mayor Sherlin said the current recipients will have to fill out this application form and finance will receive the forms and then council will look at them and make the decision.

Mr. Keith said he does want to disclose, just to clarify, that within the current year's proposal for 24-25, it does have the funds for the outside agencies that they discussed. It is typically done through the general fund each year. So those are included in the ordinance.

Mayor Sherlin asked if the regular general fund allocations were to those agencies.

Mr. Keith said, correct.

Mayor Sherlin said the Hotel/Motel, that they have been discussing, nothing has been allocated for yet, until they receive the applications.

Mr. Keith reminded Mayor Sherlin about a meeting he (Mayor Sherlin) had regarding tourism.

Mayor Sherlin said McMinn County would like to develop a tourism department that includes all the cities in McMinn County. All the mayors and city managers had a meeting, and it was discussed. There was a budget laid out, proposed budget, and they are going to have another meeting. He said they (Council) are going to wait for their meeting and bring it to work session.

Mr. Keith said that will be fine; that will be an item for consideration in the Hotel/Motel fund. Mayor Sherlin said they are requesting \$30,000.

Roll Call:

AYES: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin

NAYS: None

Mayor Sherlin said this will be the first reading of the ordinance for the budget meeting. The next reading in June will be a public hearing on the budget.

Council member Pelley nominated Joe Holmes to the Advisory Committee. Mayor Sherlin seconded the nomination.

Roll Call:

AYES: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin
NAYS: None

- 11 -

Council member Pelley called for a motion to investigate an incident in the police department. The motion died for lack of a second.

Mayor Sherlin asked City Manager Wallace if she knew anything about it and she said no, she was not aware of it.

Mrs. Edmonds said what Council Member Pelley was alluding to happened three years ago and it was investigated.

Council Member Curtis talked about all the great things happening in the city.

Vice Mayor Eaton said there is proper protocol, and this should not have been brought up in the council meeting but should have been addressed to the City Manager first.

Mayor Sherlin said it has been dropped, it was three years ago and was dealt with.

- 12 -

REPORTS

FINANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Mike Keith presented the Finance Department Report for April 2024. The report was accepted as presented.

- 13 -

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Fire Chief Brandon Ainsworth presented the Fire Department Report for April 2024. The report was accepted as presented.

- 14 -

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Police Chief Fred Schultz presented the Police Department Report for April 2024. The report was accepted as presented.

- 15 -

REPORT FROM THE CITY MANAGER

City Manager Deb Wallace presented an update on various projects and programs taking place. The report was accepted as presented.

- 16 -

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the meeting, the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Council Member Curtis moved, Vice Mayor Eaton second, for the meeting to be adjourned. Roll Call:

AYES: Curtis, Witt-McMahan, Pelley, Eaton, Sherlin.
NAYS: None



DEB WALLACE, City Manager



STEVEN S. SHERLIN, Mayor